

THE PERSIANS ARE COMING

BRUNO FRANK

The Days of The King · 1927

Twelve Thousand, a play · 1928

Trenck · 1928

The Persians Are Coming · 1929

BRUNO FRANK
THE PERSIANS ARE COMING

Translated from the German

by

H. T. LOWE-PORTER



New York • ALFRED • A • KNOPF • 1929

Copyright 1929 by ALFRED A. KNOFF, INC.

Original title

POLITISCHE NOVELLE

Copyright 1928 by

Ernst Rowohlt Verlag

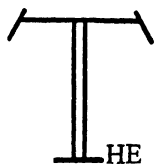
Berlin

MANUFACTURED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

TO
MY BELOVED WIFE

THE
PERSIANS
ARE
COMING

CHAPTER ONE



HE man from Germany, who occupied rooms number fourteen and fifteen in Pensione Palumbo, awoke, as he regularly did, precisely at half past six. He got up on the instant, and washed; then, with the upper half of his body still bare, entered the small sitting-room next his sleeping-chamber, where both the windows stood wide, and the South-Italian spring streamed toward him through them, full tide. The little garden below glowed with colour, the bay murmured and shone from afar; but the guest gave neither a glance. Without delay he began his morning exercises.

First the traditional writhings of the torso and bendings of the knees, obviously performed in a prescribed order. Next the traveller turned to a leather ball the size of a man's head that hung in a corner of the room suspended at about his own height

by elastic cords. He attacked this phantom enemy with powerful blows of his fists, displaying a practised technique.

He did not look like a boxer. His face was thin and clean-cut, pale though not sickly, and wore a refined, intellectual stamp; as for his body, nature had plainly not designed it to brutal ends. The strong sinews and muscular development looked forced and unnatural, standing out as they did on these almost fragile shoulders and arms.

He worked silently, methodically; in tireless alternation his fists thudded against the ball. But at length, as the blows ceased, it continued an instant to quiver and then hung as before, image of an inert mass which no will, no effort in the world, can affect.

Next the traveller took up a pair of dumbbells, provided on the inside with spiral springs of steel, extremely strong. For ten minutes he alternately compressed and released these. Then he stopped, finished dressing, and betook himself down into the little garden by way of the dark stone staircase of the old episcopal residence.

He was expected. Dr. Erlanger stood leaning against the balustrade, looking across the terraced

vineyards and out to sea. They sat down to breakfast. The guest from number fourteen found at his place an enormous specimen of a letter, a real packet in a stout reddish-brown envelope. Its like arrived every morning.

They breakfasted. The elderly servant went to and fro, in shirt-sleeves and a baize apron; the proprietress of the Palumbo mansion, a quiet Swiss lady, passed through the little garden, bowing to her guests from a distance and giving a practised glance to see that all was in order. No other guests were visible. Matutinal stillness. Not a sound. Not a bird sang in the garden.

Dr. Erlanger was tall, young, and brunette, with strikingly close-set eyes. He ate with appetite. But the guest from number fourteen took very little: a cup of tea, a slice of thin dry toast, and an egg seemed to satisfy him.

"Eating nothing still, I see," said his companion, in a respectful, almost solicitous tone. "A person who did not know you would think you were bent on keeping thin."

"Not thin, Erlanger, but abstemious." His face wore a little mocking smile as he lifted the stand

that held three sorts of preserve to pass it to the hungry man. Setting it down close to Erlanger, he looked at his own hand.

"Odd," he said. "This exercise with the dumb-bells strains the muscles so they cannot hold the least thing. A child could knock me down."

"Oh, so you do dumb-bell exercises too, Herr Carmer? Why do you do all that? I always wonder. I know only too well what your opinion is of sport and the passion for sport. With what scorn you once showed me a newspaper account with a flaring headline: 'All Honour to Our German Champions'—and it meant football champions!"

"You are confusing two different things. Sport? No, it has nothing to do with sport. It is on quite other grounds that we should cultivate our muscles."

"What other grounds?"

"Well, as somebody once said, man is a pugnacious animal. And we have to act accordingly."

"Surely you are the last person to need such primitive weapons as your fists. A dozen words, a single ironic phrase in your mildest tones—"

The other lifted a hand characterized by any-

thing else than brute force. "Wrong," said he. "Quite false. Logic is good, Erlanger, a fine delivery is useful, sarcasm serves its turn. But at bottom it all depends on the physical, the fist is the final arbiter. Politics, my friend, is not a matter of thinking. It is not a contest of intellects. Be as convincing as you like, be as witty, be as sublime. Your audience sits in front of you, and with half their consciousness they may be listening; but all the while their physical is muttering: 'We'd like to show him a thing or two.' The mastery is quite another matter, Erlanger, when you are sure of your own physique. It is ridiculous, it is mortifying, but it is true."

"Voltaire couldn't box," said Dr. Erlanger.

"No, and that is why Beauregard, the riding-master, beat him till he drew blood. Give your children physical culture, Erlanger, if you should have any. When you Jews get to know all about chin-hooks and upper-cuts, anti-Semitism will be a thing of the past, believe me." And he gave the young man a brotherly look.

They had finished breakfast; the waiter with the baize apron cleared away. Carmer opened his packet. It contained documents and written matter,

likewise quantities of clippings from German newspapers. Dr. Erlanger stood behind him, obviously willing to take part standing in the inspection; Carmer drew up a chair.

"It can't last more than a few days," said his fellow-reader, with a smile. Then silence again. Carmer made pencil notes and passed on the sheet to his secretary, who laid it carefully on the top of the pile.

"It can't go on," he said again. "Decisions have to be made and they are not willing to make them. They'll be glad to pass on the burden to others. You must hold yourself in readiness, Herr Carmer."

Silence. A nod. A smile. Only the newspaper clippings were left. Many were marked with coloured lead-pencil at points where the sender judged them deserving of especial attention. Carmer noted everything with swift, practised eye.

Other guests had begun to enter the garden. The two men stood up, shook hands, and separated.

CHAPTER TWO

CARL Ferdinand Carmer had been three times minister under the Republic: once in Prussia and twice in the Reich. He was by profession a judge. He was descended from that Carmer, Chancellor of Frederick the Great, who codified the common law of Prussia, making the first modern law-book of Europe and thus of the world. The line to which Ferdinand Carmer belonged had not been ennobled, though under several kings it might easily have been. It had held back, out of self-respect, out of civic and intellectual pride, finding in the blameless discharge of weighty offices a rank of its own to hand on to its sons.

And in particular Ferdinand Carmer's father, Minister of Justice and afterwards President of Westphalia under the first Wilhelm, had been of this mind. To his party belonged the patriots who advised the victorious Prussian king not to style himself Kaiser,

but rather Herzog of the Germans, since outward pomp and circumstance would be productive of nothing but strain and risk. This Carmer had lived into the grandson's sounding times; Ferdinand Carmer had a vivid memory of a day in Berlin when he and his father had attended the unveiling of a monument, a crashing, dashing, and smashing occasion, and of how on the way home his father had paused at Blücher's statue and pointed at it with his white-gloved hand:

"This man here saved Prussia in his time, didn't he? He saved the world from Napoleon, too. Some people deny it, but the fact remains. That's why he got his monument. But do you know how such things were done in the old days in Germany—the real Germany? Two workmen came early in the morning and took the cover off the statue. Other people were present that morning of course; three men stood here on this square: Rauch, the sculptor, Hegel, and Gneisenau."

Ferdinand, the son, was passionately jurist. To him it seemed a priceless task to employ his powers of penetration to construe the written instrument according to the needs of the swiftly changing present

and keep it pregnant. In the nightly quiet of his study, working upon the foundations of society and the State, he often felt great happiness. And as a civil judge he was largely spared the need of making the kind of decision that comes hard to a sensitive man. When the war broke out, he was, at thirty-five, a Councillor at the Kammergericht in Berlin.

Straightway the war with iron hand snatched from him all his happiness. First his wife. He had married, some years before, the daughter of an old-established business house in Southern Germany, a spirited, merry, provocative creature; their wedded life had been truly happy. That August when he joined his regiment, she went to the front as nurse; six weeks later she died of an infection: Carmer saw only her disfigured corpse. He tottered under the blow, almost to falling. But he pulled himself together. The wave of heroic unreason that rolled over the country still bore him on its tide. Two months later he could not have survived.

For then he suffered his second loss, and for a man of his temper it was well-nigh insupportable: the course of events took from him all his inward peace.

Reason had not held her sway. All his sober judgment, all the clarity and critical sense of a lifetime, had suffered shipwreck in one tumultuous hour. He had gone blind and deaf as the basest and stupidest; he had believed and raved; had stood—oh, everlasting shame!—with the frenzied crowd on a public square, and with a face like a turkey-cock had yelled and brandished his arms! He, who after all knew what war was, and how it came about: not from the shock of collision between the innately noble and the base; no, verily, but by reason of certain quite unheroic and painfully tangible facts which were wrapped up in bunting to mislead the people. The people—yes; but must he too be deceived? “Hereditary foes,” “blood-brotherhood,” “revenge”—how did words like these sound in the mouth of one whose origins, tastes, and training pledged him to truth and the judicial mind? Oh, undying shame! For years he was haunted by the thought that the death of his beloved wife had been the penalty for his betrayal of the spirit.

All this pent-up consciousness at last burst out and issued in conviction, one day in Flanders. He had been withdrawn a few days from the front and was sitting at the edge of a field to rest. A military

train rolled by bringing up new cannon-fodder. The appointed victims clustered at the open sliding doors of the cattle-cars and bellowed their songs into the autumn air.

"I look just like that," he said all at once to himself, and went a dark red, alone as he was. He got up and went back to his division. His way led through a village that had been burnt down and shot to pieces; in front of a house that was still standing lay the scorched, half-naked body of a man, with a pig rooting at it.

He did what was right in his own eyes: he threw down his weapon. He asked for sick-leave, with an insistency that gave rise to head-shakings. He had himself summoned by his court; he made his arrangements with such zeal that he soon saw himself shunned by his brother officers.

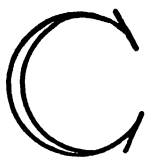
At home he found what answered his purpose. He was offered the presidency of a criminal court. Human destiny in its immediate nakedness passed day after day through his hands and before his eyes. So this field too he now ploughed, in his character of scientific administrator. Improvement was needed; reform was imperative; this was a penal system that

cruelly punished the destruction of property, but had small terrors for the inherently vicious. It was clumsy, it bungled by interference in matters of the most private and personal nature; it complicated instead of safe-guarding life. The generation that survived the horrors of these years should no longer be called upon to endure it.

Carmer worked with a violence of energy, redoubled, because only so could he endure the desolation of his empty home. He attracted notice, he awakened an echo far outside the circle of his own profession. For as the war went on, the social conscience grew more acute in many strata of society—in part the mere effect of fear, in part that increased capacity to feel which suffering brings in its train. These decisions of the judge of a high court, learned, lucid, forcible, sagacious, instinct with a humanity which sternly refused to indulge in sentiment, were eagerly taken up and discussed in the daily press. And as the end of the terror drew near, their author was urged to come forward personally. He made an impression: first by his face, so furrowed with suffering and thought, then by the brilliant dispassionateness of his discourse. The party of civic progress made sure

of him. He was a member of the National Assembly and sat in the first Reichstag. Then, in the third year after the Revolution, he laid down his judgeship and took his decisive step to the Left. They began to hate him, to berate him, to calumniate and threaten—so that despite the briefness of his course he seemed fully accredited—and quite in the German fashion—to a political career.

CHAPTER THREE



CHARMER took his daily way. Not once in the nearly three weeks he had been here had he failed to take it.

He went down the narrow street, across the square, past the ancient bronze door of the cathedral, cut through the village, and climbed up beyond it, towards Villa Cembrone. It was a walk that never ceased to thrill. This Ravello was a tomb, on the ruins of which some poor remnants of life still stirred. To-day only a small village in numbers and importance, it had once been a powerful city, throned on its mountain-top, the residence of a bishop, of great men and sumptuous livers. Some buildings still stood, of black tufa, Moorish, houses of the common people, now forlorn ruins, scantily occupied. But the marvellous seats of those Afflitti, Castaldi, Ruffoli, with their Alhambralike splendour, their flights of Moorish

halls, their pleasure-courts, their fountains and marble basins—of them nothing was left but these gardens riotous with bloom, a broken wall once set with close rows of delicate columns, a splendid horseshoe arch, filled with myrtle and laurel, the fragment of a fountain's brim.

All this was beautiful and rare; it was not this he loved. Each morning he mounted to the height.

He reached it by a route part path, part stair, dirty and badly kept. Half-naked children played in front of the tufa houses, the strangest mixture of types, so that, looking, one sank back through the centuries, with a giddy, dreamlike sense. Here were boys like North African Bedouins; a slender little maid showed the brow and line of hair of a daughter of the seafaring Hellene; another's bright golden crest bespoke Norse forbears. And many a little face mingled all these traits, so that you read therein the whole entangled saga of this rich and fructuous coast, whither through time or simultaneously the peoples of Europe and Africa had turned their adventurous prowls. They were merry and friendly, these mongrel survivals; many knew and greeted the stranger who mounted their little stair every day. Soon he was beyond them.

As he came up to Villa Cembrone, the sun was already intense. He left the house on his right and crossed the garden by the long, vine-bordered path that slanted through it; slowly, with anticipation ever fresh. He walked among blossoming roses and hortensias, and breathed their fragrance without seeing them; his eye went straight to where the pergola left off and there was nothing but abysmal blue. His heart throbbed. A moment he hesitated, then stepped outside.

The belvedere of Villa Cembrone is a broad, long terrace, at the edge of the mountain, high, high above the sea. It is furnished with two marble seats.

Carmer went forward to the balustrade. On this earth was nothing more beautiful for him. It was inexhaustible. Ah, what it meant to him, this spot! Once as a youth he had come here and found it priceless. But not so incomparable as in his maturity it revealed itself to his soul. He had travelled, as everybody does today. But with each year he had known more surely that this place, precisely this, this marble balcony five yards wide and twenty long, was his heart's true home. Now he came day after day. Just for this one spot of earth had he travelled so far. He would

wake at night, restless with joy of the morning's home-coming.

A mighty view from this terrace—potent, heart-purging. A high precipice, dizzyingly high, above slopes of vineyard, mulberry, and fig; such slopes again to right and left, the bronze-brown mountain beyond, advancing to embrace, then widening away; there, opening broad and bright into space between, the bay. An ocean bay, sun-drenched and luminous, of a blue that rose to purple, sank in violet depths; deep, deep; not making drunken, not rousing longings, merely breathing peace and permanence and certitude. Nowhere in the effulgent heaven a single cloud, not one half-tone; no doubts; unmistakable each line and colour. Everything lucid, living, of this world.

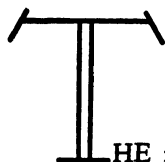
Ah, to stand thus! To send the quiet eye following the fine contour of the mainland, slowly, slowly, as far as Cape Licosia, on the right, where the coast rounds to the Gulf of Policastro and so falls from view. Yet to pause midway, at Pæstum, where the temple stands out clear in the bright light, Poseidon's dwelling by the sea, up whose stair the god mounts dripping. Then to travel round the horizon's

vault, as far as Capri, where it rears its rocky height, island-seat of the Sirens, and on the mainland opposite, Circe's enchanted seat. For all this was fabulous, Homeric soil; out of these blue deeps arose the immortal sea-tales which are the earliest poesy of the western world. Neither upon them rests any shadow; they are all clean and clear, all firm large concept, all rounded, satisfying metaphor. O inland sea, radiant cradle of all truth and beauty—still comforting us with thy figs and wine!

Figs and wine. Carmer could not forbear a smile at the thought of something he had once read: how in some far northern tongues a word still survives from the Norman's southern period: *figiacasta*, of a longing for figs. Its meaning is lost, the islanders who utter it use it to mean any sort of longing. *Figiacasta*—yes, here any and all sorts of longing were appeased. Here the heart rested from all the ails of chaos and of torpor that elsewhere plagued this earth; all the unclean, stuffy fanaticism, smell of powder and fumes of incense that clogged the breathing under the leaden skies of home. Almost one forgot that northward lay a harassed and misty land, spasmodically defending itself on the one hand against the

urgent doctrines of the Orient, on the other against the wayward colossus beyond the sea. To the east an ancient empire shrieked its doctrine of salvation; westward the iron New World came thunderously on with empty clangor. Here one heard them not. To gaze, to breathe, to live; to pass one's days blithely and with dignity; simply to perform one's simple task, to be a man. Nothing else; no fanatic, no dreamer, no hater, no brute beast, ashamed of its body; no adept of the abyss, not obsessed by the delusion of size; no ignorant enthusiast, no slave to the idea—ah, thirst-slaking fruit, strong wine and healing air of the South!

CHAPTER FOUR



HE next day was a Sunday. Carmer's stay was nearing its end. The return to Germany was imminent, and Achille Dorval had wired from Paris to have the date of their meeting fixed. It was to take place on the southern coast of France, in Cannes; Carmer having acceded to the wish of the older man, who did not like to leave his own country.

The two men knew each other from many conferences, and felt mutual sympathy. Up there in Paris they kept their fingers on the pulse of German politics; they had no doubt the Government would fall, and Carmer be summoned; and the French statesman had a lively wish to see the German before he was burdened with the cares of office. Dorval, in his unwarped old age, strove stoutly for a great goal: peace with security; such was the heritage he hoped to leave behind him.

Carmer had twice put off going. Cannes—his stay there was only a matter of days, with the immediate departure for Germany following, and for that he had small desire. Every morning, as he studied the day's dispatches, with Dr. Erlanger behind his chair, he was conscious—not without some remorse—that his distaste had increased.

For this it was, to return: to plunge into that turbid, seething cauldron of ill-will that called itself German politics; to whirl slowly round in the amorphous brew; to hear in public sittings the winged phrases warmed over from a happier time; while behind closed doors he had to listen to the fears and wranglings of Philistines who sought only their own small interests. Never to hail a direct, manly impulse, never to hear a word that mounted like smoke on a clear day; to see his own party, with which his own heart surely ought to be, full of needy bureaucratic souls who dealt in petty bargaining and were afraid of their own courageous impulses; while the few able and thinking comrades were crushed by the times, worn out and vilified.

And all about one the people: those sixty millions, heart of the Continent, eternal womb of the

idea, the home of music and heart-felt poetry; but as a political entity corrupted and deteriorated by a history dark and woeful beyond precedent. So incapable of being body to her rich soul, so un-self-conscious, so childish, that they fell a victim to any flatterer with his tongue in his cheek. Never, in their lack of self-confidence, more gladly convinced of anything than that they alone, ringed round with ravenous beasts, were faithful, pure, and brave, pious, truth-loving, great of soul. So strong their tendency to romantic self-deception that they believed in every demagogue who came with enough hazy bombast of traditional phrases and set himself up as saviour and symbol of the popular virtues; they believed the brawling general, the empty opportunist mystic, even the mystic for mercenary ends, if only he seemed to satisfy the anæmic yearning for the colossal and hung out the pious national mottoes on his shop-front.

Looking from the bright southern distance at this cloud-hung fatherland, it seemed to him the skies had grown opaque and drear by reason of all the nebulous half-thoughts and phrases that had mounted up to it. Ah, who could wish to return? Who would not rather forget it all; or even if he lived there, to live

alone, in the sincerity of his own thoughts, in his empty house?

And were not all the men of any worth of the same mind as himself? Rare indeed was it for a man of serious purpose and intellectual self-respect to become a politician in Germany. Everybody looked on at those obscure activities with distrust and contempt, or, rather, they did not look, they turned away and left the field to the tribe.

And for that very reason were Carmer's days here numbered. Impossible as it was not to keep playing with the idea of flight, just as impossible was flight itself: deserting the flag, the good cause of uprightness and human endeavour. No, for the little group of fighters was too small.

This, then, was his last Sunday. Earlier than usual he had mounted to his height. Now, descending, he sat down, the only guest, before the poor little café opposite the bronze door of the cathedral. Every Sunday at this hour he sat here, looking across the square. It was always empty, for it was the hour for morning service in the old Romanesque church; he would sit awaiting the moment when the organ within would burst into the final accord, the great door

slowly open, and the whole little town, in Sunday attire, stream out and begin to walk up and down. Then he could see the church in all its length up to the high altar. No one was there save the sacristan, going about to put out the candles. There on the right was the pulpit, in black and white marble, resting on delicately twisted columns, with the cheerful lions on which these rested in their turn. High above, in porphyry pomp, the eagle that held the reading-desk. In the sunny cathedral square the populace paced their little Corso up and down; it was refreshing to see how much pleasant dignity they had, and what a sense of form. No one was loud or bold, no one was furtive; the dwellers in this remote little community quite definitely still possessed a social gift, unknown to the inhabitants of his own formless, gestureless native land.

But today a change had taken place. Earlier in the day he had noticed nothing; but now, as he sat there with his iced drink and listened to the worshippers behind the bronze doors, he saw that the empty square was changed. It was decorated.

The effect was grisly. On all sides the portrait looked down; six, eight times it stared from huge,

rudely printed placards; at the baker's it quite covered the window, so that certainly no one could see out; it bored through Carmer's back from the wall of the little café; a mammoth one hung down from the Town Hall; two even flanked the church on either side; one the ancient Roman, with a suggestion of a toga, the other in the steel helmet of the years of blood. All of them portentous; angular of outline, dark of eye, with drawn brows and compressed lips, every sign of softness or weakness suppressed as though before a mirror. All heroic effect, all careful composition, all theatrical assumption of enormous strength of will: here was the prince of princes, lord of life and death, the super-Cæsar—renegade and Bramarbas.

Carmer had seen little of the contagion up to now. The All-Powerful there in the toga was the creature and deputy of the great industrialists of the north; he had brought their rebellious hordes of workmen to heel, in the holy cause of production and the bank-account. Up there in the industrial districts, and in Rome, his capital, he held sway, and blustered mightily. It took longer to win the south, where there was little industry, and the population was lax, more disinterested and inclined to mock.

What all had they not been in this Kingdom of Naples, without lifting a finger themselves! Good governments they had had; much oftener vicious and bad. Norman they had been, Saracen and Hohenstaufen, French by the grace of the Anjous, and Spanish under the Regents; then Austrian, French again, and lastly Italian under the House of Savoy. The sun always shone, the almond-tree flourished, there were figs and wine, and poverty was kind. All that was at an end. The mailed fist reached down from Rome; there were trains of recruits, a blaze of glory.

So it was today. Banners hung everywhere; garlands, and mottoes; a little speaker's platform had been run up. Well, he could hardly be expected to look on at this. Such sycophantic demonstrations he did not, alas, need to leave home to see. He put down his money on the little table.

Just then the organ burst out in the recessional; the faithful began to stream forth, and, punctual to the very moment, the marching trains emerged from the side-streets. They had held back, obviously, in deference to the other, older power, and kept the square empty during the service, but now, on the word of command, they pressed religiously forward to re-

ceive with their gospel of salvation the populace issuing from the arms of the other creed.

Martial music, hymns, salutes, the arm flung upwards, aping Rome, as everything aped Rome in the whole black-shirted troop—even their faces had a Roman quality as they clenched their jaws in imitation of the half-god in the ubiquitous portrait.

Today there was no Corso. Ravello was celebrating its feast of arms. A display like this they could not resist. In Sunday mood, grateful for the diversion, they gave willing ear to the hymn that prated of youth and yet again of youth, though what it celebrated was the oldest and most outworn thing in the world. They succumbed, these children of the South, to the militant gesture, flung up their arms and joined in the song: shyly at first, not knowing the words, but loud and lustily as the same strophe was repeated again and again, until the whole square sang. The black-shirted front broke up and mingled with the crowd; the hymn was repeated twice or thrice; then a word of command, and silence. The orator mounted the primitive stage.

Yes, Carmer had heard all that before—how many times! Even at the first sentences his throat

burned with a familiar, bitter loathing. He could have prompted the fellow there.

Oh, yes, yes: power, and weapons, and force, and the noblest race, and the prescriptive right, and the Day, that now was dawning, the new race, and the lordship of the Continent. Away with freedom! Hail to a newer bond, a higher freedom! And whoever rebelled should be crushed, and the eagles of the legions had flown across glaciers and seas, and room for the strong, room for the able! And we are young, and the others are old, and whatever great things have happened on this globe have all been the work of our race; for were they not all ours, the great generals and the great princes and the great artists, all, all of them ours? And Christ Himself was an Italian! And we are pure and we are loyal, and we are noble and we are pious, and we are virtuous and brave and great of soul. And everywhere beyond our borders is decay and luxury and barbarism dropping to its death. Italy, Italy!

And when the speaker, a round-faced, sweating little citizen, had done, the crowd stood there and hurrayed with the black-shirted hosts of publicity. There they were, all pure, chosen Italians; their hearts beat high under their Sunday coats, with the joy of

belonging to this unique race—yes, there they stood, with their Hellenic brows and Arabian eyes, their fair Norman hair and Spanish noses. Ah, it was a blessed festival; and when two thousand such would have done their work, then would come the Day for the Milan industrialists; when the legions should march over Mont Cenis and the Brenner and show industry beyond the Alps the valour and the glory of ancient Rome!

Carmer got up and went back by a side path to his episcopal dwelling. After all, it made no great difference whether he travelled in two days or today. As he wrote the dispatches home and to Dørvall, he realized, with a smile, that he looked forward to the change.

Dr. Erlanger was told. They would travel at midday.

CHAPTER FIVE

HIS career took just the opposite course from yours, did it not, Herr Carmer? By birth and office you were conservative, and you have come under the banner of the fighters. While Achille Dorval was a socialist—and what a socialist!—but he is so no more.”

“Outwardly you are right, Erlanger. And what a socialist, as you say! He was fiery. As quite a young man he was such an enthusiastic defender of the general strike that at the big love-feast they made him their honorary president. Nobody has preached more persistently against war.”

“I should say. I have read his early speeches. ‘When we get the order to fire upon strangers who have done us no harm, we shall know how to turn our weapons elsewhere!’ And on top of that he was minister during the war!”

“But in the second year of it he began negotiations, and that inflexible old man with a face like a Chinaman drove him out. No, Erlanger, I don't agree with you. He grew up, he grew grey, he sought and achieved power over men and the times, he took roundabout ways, he made pacts and signed compromises, he took his time like a man with eternity before him. But there is one idea to which he has been true: the simple idea of justice and freedom. He does not examine, does not criticize it; he quite simply believes, and wants to believe. It often happens with a man that his behaviour is simpler than his intelligence seems to warrant.”

“That I can understand,” said Dr. Erlanger.

“You will do so completely, you will feel it physically when he stands before you. It is that simple idea has kept his eyes so clear—ah, perhaps you have to be born a Frenchman to be as happy as that!”

The night journey lay behind them. They had been carried in their sleep up the edge of the Tyrrhenian Sea, and now in broad daylight followed its rocky northern shore, whose clean outline unfolded along the joyous wave, sometimes in such a curve that they could see both whence they came and whither they

went. The line lay so close to the water that spray dashed against the carriages.

"Yes, he is happy," Carmer repeated. "It is a gift from the gods. Everything seems so easy to him! I believe he never reads a book, and documents—ah, no. He is reluctant to put anything on paper but his signature, and even of that he is chary. No man can be less of an official. His enemies say he is pathologically lazy. When you visit him in his ministry, you enter a large oval room, with beautiful gobelins on the walls. A few arm-chairs, nothing else but the writing-desk, and that perfectly empty, not even an ink-well. At this writing-table, ironically enough, he sits and smokes his cigarettes. Now and again comes an official and makes a speech. It must not last more than ten minutes; after that he nods, without a word, and is alone again. After a while the bell rings, they find him as they left him, he gives his decision. When he falls, and a new man moves in, he takes his hat and stick and goes. Nothing else to move."

"And he comes back very soon, too."

"Yes. How often is it he has been minister in this quarter of a century—ten times, twelve? Each time he just goes on where he left off, not much that

is constructive has been done in the mean time. And he has forgotten nothing. 'I have a memory like the Roman orator Hortensius,' he said to me once. 'I can never forget anything I have heard. This orator, for instance, I must have heard of him when I was a boy. Hortensius—a good name for a gardener!' That is the way he talks."

"There is one thing I don't understand," said Dr. Erlanger. "People who are well-informed on the international situation say he is ignorant. How does that fit with this wonderful memory of his?"

Carmer smiled. "Yes," he said, "he is responsible for that. 'I don't know anything'—that is his favourite remark. 'In the fourteenth century people would have gaped at me, but I am too unsystematic for these times; today it is the professionals' turn.' You should see his face when he utters that word. It is not intended for a compliment."

Carmer was silent, looking out across the Ligurian Sea, that shimmered and danced in the noon-day light. Then his gaze travelled back; he motioned at the newspapers lying on the upholstered seat.

"Dorval is right," he said. "The professionals cannot cure our continent. What they are for is to

countenance and perpetuate the abuses of the time. They torture in Roumania, the professionals, in Turkey they hack off arms and legs by process of law, in Italy they exile and murder, in Russia they hang. Even down to the smallest detail they obstruct everything that is necessary or useful—look there—what an utter absurdity!"

They had stopped. The French frontier official was standing in the doorway of the compartment, asking for their passports.

CHAPTER SIX

W

HEN they reached their hotel, Achille Dorval had not come. He was not even announced. The clerks whispered behind the desk and stared at the questioners wide-eyed. Then they showed them their rooms.

The dinner-hour came; they ordered the meal sent upstairs. Carmer ate sparingly as always; but also he spoke scarcely a word. Dr. Erlanger looked distressed at his mood.

"Dear me," he said, "what can it be? A misunderstanding? Some unavoidable business at the last minute? Or only that he is a little late?"

"He shouldn't be."

"He knows you are on a holiday, and he is in harness. He spoke yesterday in the Chamber."

Carmer only nodded. "I know, it is foolish,"

he said. "You are quite right. But the public opinion of the world has played the deuce with our nerves. We Germans are all over-sensitive, we are far too thin-skinned."

"But surely you know Herr Dorval's position well enough. Which of you took more pains to bring about this meeting?"

"You are quite right, I told you so before. An Englishman would not mind it, or a Bulgarian. They would be glad enough to have an evening to amuse themselves."

"Let us go and do likewise. I really should not like to leave you in this mood."

"Right again. Shall we change?"

When they returned to the lobby, it was empty. The dining-room doors were wide open upon a scene of elegant desolation. The lights were low, the odours of food hung thick over the disordered tables with their fading, weedy flowers. Waiters in shirt-sleeves bustled about.

"Yes," said the major-domo, "our guests eat early, and they eat fast. This is my fifth year here, and every winter they go to the Casino half an hour earlier. As though they were sent for." He smiled,

like a stage-manager who knows his way about behind the scenes of human passion.

Outside in the paradisial starlight, not a soul. The sea murmured against the deserted esplanade.

"If you went walking on the Great St. Bernard at this hour, you could not well be more alone," Carmer said.

"Except for those." Dr. Erlanger pointed to the gleaming asphalt where belated automobiles were still shooting past with a low drone and now and again a warning wail; long, low carriages these, brilliantly lit within. A glimpse of white fur, a flashing agraffe.

Light streamed out from the vast windows of the Casino, at the end of the promenade. Carmer and his companion, waiting in the cloak-room, saw on their left the open stairway going down into the night-restaurant, whence issued a surge of music out of the primeval forest, a sort of deep howling in charleston time, sombre and brooding, shot through by whistles and shrieks, as the night by a lightning-flash. But twice, as they stood there, there rose out of the murk a sweet, nostalgic melody, beginning deep and low and swelling out on a brilliant high note: it was an

uncannily convincing imitation on the saxophone of a female voice. It almost made one angry, yet it was somehow heart-breaking. They took tickets and entered the first salon.

It was still as a church, save for the monotonous time-honoured calls of the officiating croupiers, the dry, echoless rattling of the wood and composition counters. In the first room, where the play was for lower stakes, perhaps an occasional whisper; but in the holy of holies beyond, the frozen calm of sheer absorption. In evening toilette and full dress they sat, waiting for their cards as the box went round the table.

Mental activity, in this game, seemed reduced to a minimum. If you could count up to ten, it was enough. A trained animal might have taken part. All the tables were full, and about each a silent crowd clustered.

There was one, largest of all and most religious, set apart from the others, and served by majestic attendants in chains of office: in the centre of it, on a raised chair, sat the keeper of the bank, anonymous tool of his consortium, and dealt out the cards without stopping, right and left. Nobody had to wait, fortune

was ever present. Stacks of coloured counters lay in front of the banker. The profit of a coal-mine, the dividend of a ship, a whole tea harvest, glided over the table. No one's face was flushed and no one smiled.

A ritual vacuity reigned. The traditional figures in such a scene, the card-sharper, the ruined man staking his all—these were not here. They dared not come. The great capitalistic world was by itself. North America and England predominated; but one saw the great cattle-owner of the Argentine, the coffee-magnate from Rio and Amsterdam, and what was left of the rich European nobility. The youthful male was largely lacking; the female was present, but without power to charm. No one here fell victim to her seductions, though the gowns of Molyneux and Patou were set off by jewels fit for an idol. The atmosphere in a mathematics class-room could not be less sensual. The prevailing wind was abstract, icy.

This Cannes, here on this southern coast, was at this hour the most fashionable spot on earth. One must appear at a fixed date to prove that one belonged: the social time-clock was not to be tampered with. And this was Cannes—this room.

“Does it amuse you, Erlanger?” Carmer

asked. "Shall I tell you the people's names? Or do you want to play?"

"God forbid, sir. I am poor. But you—do you find it enjoyable?"

"Enjoyable? No, that doesn't any of it look like enjoyment. The word is a misnomer. Why, Death glides round among the tables in a night-gown."

A middle-aged man with a pointed beard bowed to Carmer across the millionaire table. He was in evening dress, like everybody else; had a great bald spot, very refined features, and an agreeable smile. He was not playing, merely amusing himself by looking on. This was Ustrjalow, the Soviet Commissioner.

They left the gambling-saloon and strolled through the great pleasure-palace, past bars and dance-halls and concert-rooms and the built-in theatre, whose doors were just opened for the long *entr'acte*. Once more they stood in the entrance hall, at the top of that broad flight of stairs.

They had nothing else to do, and Carmer, perhaps, dreaded the emptiness of his hotel room, so they descended. The Negro band was repeating that number with the deep howling horns interspersed with whistles and shrieks—it was evidently the rage

of the moment. Once more the sweet, nostalgic female voice issuing from a saxophone played by a grinning devil rose like a burlesque of all the yearning in the world.

Here too one heard little French. The prosperity of the country had been hard hit, and few of her nationals participated in the luxury of this winter resort. The Russians too had ceased to come. The display of jewels and gowns had something bleached and corpse-like about it. Here was no atmosphere of joyousness or charm; merely an unreal, inaccessible stage where rivalries of millions, spectral duels of gold, were fought out. The women who wore these jewels, the men who paid for them, were weary and silent. Wearily, in silence, they were dancing on the glass space illuminated from beneath with coloured light: dancing to the diabolical rhythms of the Negro band. Only at two large tables full of Americans was there any sign of life; they were pelting each other rather consciously with the little velvet dogs presented by the restaurant to its guests. Nobody paid any attention. The ancient riches of the earth sat there jaded and weary unto death, with the rapid syncopations of that primitive music frantically roaring, grunting

and whistling in its ears. Some of the guests were striking in appearance: there was a tall Indian lady in coloured veils, her left nostril encrusted with an emerald, and near her, at a little round table, the constitutional king of a northern state, quenched and correct, with two elderly companions.

Then, in the middle of a number, at its very wildest pitch, the music stopped. Dead quiet. It worked like a negative command for silence, and was so meant. Twenty seconds went by. Becky Floyd appeared on the threshold.

She was most decently, she was girlishly dressed. A high, dull-green bodice shrouded her bust, the moderately full pink and gold hoopskirt scarcely uncovered the brown ankles. She paused a moment on the second step of the stair and smiled down with those animal eyes of hers upon these serried millionaires. Her black hair was oily smooth and glittering; from it art had removed the last trace of African kinkiness, it fitted her small head like a skin, and mirrored the ceiling lights.

With a high, nerve-shattering whine the music set in again: a sudden violent ensemble of all the percussion and wind-instruments, and all these

Negro throats swelled upward in a burst of homage. Becky Floyd came down the steps and began to dance.

She was nineteen years old, and her fame was immense. Before her, white society abased itself in surrender to the highly spiced appeal of the race of day after tomorrow. Her narrow, animal eyes, her hips, her knees, animated a thousand dreams. She might have married dukes; also she might have been the bride of a money-magnate in her own country, where no white man of the proletariat willingly breathes the same air with creatures of her colour. She preferred to be alone, unregularized and unbestowed, to bear her gifted brown body erect and sufficient unto itself. This dark damsel exploited her person as a speculator does a commercial enterprise. She was known to work sixteen hours a day. In Paris she spent the forenoon practising, and in film studios. She began dancing by luncheon time, at Claridge's or the Ritz; the rest of her day was one golden round of performances. She drove in her car from reception to reception, music-hall to music-hall; no *revue*, no *variété* programme could count on success without her dusky play of limb, and the gay world of Paris having once seen her could not rest until they saw her again

on the carpet of a drawing-room. In the small hours she appeared at her own night-club on Montmartre, where there was never a seat to be had; where elegant *conoscenti* packed into her rooms like sardines, and every one of the tiny tables netted the income of a wholesale business. When, at about four in the morning, she left, her body was as taut, the smile of her animal eyes as fresh, as they had been sixteen hours before. She had kindled the blood of uncounted thousands with her charms; chattered with hundreds, been agreeable, amusing, provocative. But she had seen or heard no single person; it had all been like water running off her oily, glassy, night-black hair. She captivated without respect of person, like a force of nature—and every cheque she sent on Monday morning to the Bank of England was larger than the last, and bore more overwhelming witness to her ever-increasing dominion over the whites.

But now there was rain in Paris, and bad temper, and the hosts of her adorers had fled to this azure sea. And she made them pay. She raged up and down the coast like a slave-driver, fifty miles an hour, and wielded her dusky magic like a lash. Today she had danced in Mentone, at Cap Martin, at the Neg-

resco in Nice; a minute ago she had sprung out of her car here in Cannes; who knew where else she would dance tonight, at what gaieties be present, in what villas or casinos, or lantern-lit gardens by the sea? She danced and she subjugated. Her cheque this week was the largest of her imperial career.

She stood, in her modest little period frock, and began to dance, a sort of languishing, old-fashioned waltz. Quite slowly, the beautiful arms outstretched, one could see the gold-tinted finger-nails. She held her little head bent far back, the eyes apparently closed, the lids dusted with gold powder. Then suddenly her body quivered all its length; a lightninglike gesture, very harsh and bizarre, cut short the discreet dance as though in mockery. But at the end of it she fell on one knee with a movement of exquisite modesty, like the pupil of a ballet-school at a Thuringian court.

Without a pause, in a sudden shriek the Negro music came back to its own. Becky Floyd's mouth, but now composed in a perfect *jeune fille* smile, rounded suddenly into the African nozzle it really was. With a malicious little grin she looked round the room and lighted on a stout bald-headed gentleman sitting

peacefully with his wife. She called on him. He obeyed. The summons was usual and expected, everybody knew you had to comply.

The extraordinary pair stood together on the illuminated space in the middle of the floor. "Dance!" cried Becky. Her voice was high and crystalline and twittering, disquieting to the senses. "Dance the way I do!" She pulled up her frock, showing those marvellously shaped, those world-famous legs, darker than her face and arms; which now began the contortions of the charleston, twinkling lightninglike, with fabulous muscular command. Opposite her, the fat man gave a pathetic imitation, with an apologetic smile; his paunch rose and fell, his grey hairs fluttered at his temples. Becky Floyd did not touch him. She danced close in front of him, spurring him on with twittering cries; faster, faster; she drew down her lizardlike head between her shoulders, made herself small, swayed backwards and forwards; looked artlessly up beneath her lashes and moved her arms with a bizarre sawing movement, close to her sides. The orchestra bawled and whistled. The victim was released.

She chose others. Her eye darted here and

there and unerringly sought out the oldest, most impossible greybeards: those whose bodies rich and fleshliness had made grotesque. No one drew back; in obedience to hallowed tradition each in turn came and offered up his dignity, painfully stirring his old limbs, already bent toward the grave, to follow the motions of her exotic, uncanny youth.

Thrills of delight ran through the room. What all these blasé, unsusceptible people were really finding here was the secret joy of self-abasement. They gazed insatiably, with a little subdued applause, a few bursts of suppressed laughter. Then were suddenly still, with almost frightened glances. Becky Floyd was obviously about to dare her utmost.

"Nothing small about her," said Carmer. "This is certainly worth seeing." He spoke louder than usual; spoke to break the spell he felt stealing over him, to his own discomfort. And he told Dr. Erlanger the name of the partner Becky had just summoned.

"Impossible," cried Dr. Erlanger, wide-eyed, in boyish astonishment. "Out of the question." He was wrong.

From the head of the flower-decked table

where he presided the great London financier stood up; the ancient, almost mythical head of a financial dynasty two hundred years old; bowed with age, scarcely any more a body, but still a power, a legend, the greybeard at whose nod whole nations trembled, whole peoples starved or were fed.

Unhesitatingly he obeyed—the audience hardly dared look. With a good deal of poise he took his place and moved his ninety-year-old feet in childish imitation of her ferocious paces. But now she pulled her decorous frock up higher and higher; showing her knees and then her thighs, she whirled in primitive frenzy; with a high, piercing, crystalline shriek she seized both skirt and bodice with her two hands and tore them off. Her exotic pointed breasts, with nipples tinted purple, leaped into the light; entirely nude now save for the *pudendum*, she whirled and turned in a frenzy of self-display.

The old Englishman stood still and looked at her, looked at close range upon this nakedness, these dark brown thighs, the finest in the world perhaps, so flawlessly swelling, so slender—so consumingly feminine, too, as though formed in breathing bronze by the hand of a strange god.

Carmer looked round him, curiously affected. The room was on its feet, all apathy gone. They yelled and hurrahed. They clapped in time to the primeval music, they shouted in fifteen of the white man's tongues; and in every masculine eye was envy of the ancient there who had been the chosen today. For this was it: that a man was privileged to stand exhibiting his desire, his flesh-worship, in glaring light, before everybody's face and eyes—this was the new and monstrous device by which the dusky creature aroused a world and held it in her hand.

The old Englishman had slowly returned to his table. But his place would be filled, the game would go on mounting to the end; with more and more daring and provocative play of thigh she would goad herself on to the uttermost, the monstrous, shameless, incredible, sardonic triumph of the Black.

But at this moment the unlikely happened: the attention of the room was diverted from Becky Floyd. A man came down the steps: already old, large-built and angular and rather stooped. His dress was impossible—if for no other reason than because he still wore his overcoat, a tight, heavy, ill-fitting black cloth garment. Even his stiff black hat was still

on his head, such was his haste, and in his hand a silver-mounted cane clutched below the handle and held out clumsily before him. So he came down the steps, and into the African empress's *mise-en-scène*. Apparently it did not occur to him that his entry would produce an effect. He advanced, glancing eagerly round him, putting people aside. Those who were sitting stood up, many of them bowed. But Achille Dorval moved as though through an empty room, straight toward the man he sought. He stretched out both hands, even the one that held the stick so awkwardly clutched; looked into Carmer's eyes and said with a laugh:

"I am inconsolable, my friend. But this is what comes of travelling with a car on the roads Napoleon built!"

"You had an accident?"

"A stupid break-down. Just outside Grenoble, where the armies surrendered to him. But that did not mend matters. What must you have thought of me!"

He nodded to Dr. Erlanger, who stood there behind his chair, rather pale in the face. Then all three went out together. The Negro music had stopped long ago, in response to shouts from all sides. The

company stood and gazed after this man who in his grey and homely old age stood for an Idea: the Idea of Europe and Peace. The Scandinavian king, between his two old attendants, looked reflectively after him, too.

Becky Floyd's primitive paroxysms had given place with suddenness to perfect sobriety; with a shrewd side-glance of her glorious animal eyes, she had noiselessly disappeared as Achille Dorval came in.

CHAPTER SEVEN

HERR François Bloch, Dorval's attendant, rose out of his chair in the vestibule of the hotel. He was no older than Dr. Erlanger, but by contrast delicately built and almost fair. Only their eyes were surprisingly alike, close-lying, shrewd and friendly and sad all at once. These eyes met as they were introduced; and in their gaze spoke thousands of years of identical destiny.

Achille Dorval said: "I think, Herr Carmer, we shall not need our young friends any more this evening. Go and have a good rest."

Both young men bowed. "Good-night, *Meister*," said Dr. Erlanger, and Carmer gave him his hand.

"Good-night, *maître*," said François Bloch to Dorval. The word sounded a little different in French, but not more so than the speech of peasants in one mountain valley does from the speech of peas-

ants in the next. A smile lingered on both their faces as they turned and by common consent strolled out into the garden.

Here too it was empty at this hour. A faint breath of growing things was in the air. The soft sand-strewn paths reflected the reddish light from transparencies close by. There was a subdued sound of music. Basket chairs and benches invited the idler, but no one came. The young men walked up and down awhile.

"Haven't I seen your name before?" Dr. Erlanger asked—it was the first word they had spoken. "In the *Nouvelle Revue française*, perhaps?"

"Quite possible," said François Bloch, red with pleasure. "I do a little literary work."

"A study of Stefan George and Mallarmé, if I remember right?"

They sat down in a nook among orange and laurel and began a long conversation, which soon became animated to an extreme degree.

Above, in Dorval's hotel sitting-room, with its uninspired elegance, nothing as yet betrayed the presence of an occupant. He had very likely brought little with him; the only personal touch was a large

leather pouch on the table, filled with dark-coloured tobacco. This he took up, and began at once to roll himself, one after the other, a supply of cigarettes. He must have rolled hundreds of thousands, so precise and delicate were the movements of the small hand which a little before had so awkwardly clutched the walking-stick.

A waiter answered a summons. "I won't take anything," Carmer said.

"Nothing at all? Well, my friend, you may bring me an ordinary white wine of the region, not in a bottle, just open."

"I doubt, sir," said the waiter, scarcely hiding with a bow his supercilious smile, "if there is such a thing in the house."

"Then somebody can run across the street and fetch it. Just bring it to me."

And then began their long, constructive conversation in the cause of peace.

Dorval spoke first, breaking a silence:

"I am delighted that you are soon to be my vis-à-vis."

"It is not settled, Monsieur Dorval. I have not decided."

"You will. Yes, yes, I have my dreams of holidays, too, for the few years there are left me—I dream about taking walks, and basking in the sun. But nobody does it. We can't. Well, Herr Carmer, I am all ears. Instruct me."

"What exquisite irony! Instruct the man, before whom the known earth lies like a chess-board?"

"Good, we'll let the comparison stand. I do know the moves the pieces ought to make. But the rest of you know every splinter of the wood they are cut out of. You've been told, haven't you, how ignorant I am?"

"A charming fiction—all Europe knows and enjoys it."

The wine had come. "Here," Dorval said, "I will drink to that one thing we both have at heart." He held the tumbler like a peasant, clasped in his whole small hand. "Ah, how good it smells." He bent his face over the wine. "I am sorry we cannot talk in your language at all. I have been too lazy. Once two men like us would have spoken Latin together—but that is a thing of the past."

He was silent a moment. Then he said again: "Instruct me; let me know your thoughts. I want to

dig down deep and lay a foundation on which we can both move with freedom and confidence."

"Then you, Monsieur Dorval, must bring bricks as well as I. Why do you lay stress on my being the first and only one to speak?"

Dorval sat there relaxed, his heavy head drawn down so that the cheap black stuff of his suit lay in wrinkles across the shoulders. His massive jowl rested on a high, old-fashioned standing collar. The lips hung flabby; untended, frayed and bristling the grey moustache. The nose heavy and jutting. His eyes were lowered, beneath the high arched brows. The silence lasted some time. Then he looked up, with a gaze that was open, cordial, and shrewd; and spoke, with lips that had turned suddenly firm and taut:

"I am quite sincere. You may speak."

"If I doubted it, I should not have come."

"That is courteous of you, Herr Carmer, but I do not demand that it should be true. You have come hither, not because you believe me, but that you may learn to do so. Very good, then," he went on slowly, almost solemnly; "my position is simple. I am not a very complex man. I have dedicated the rest of my life to the idea of European peace—that is

my policy, in a nutshell. On the day they insist on my disowning it, I resign. You may quote me word for word when you make your first speech in the Reichstag after you take office."

The old man closed his eyes. He sat there, a shabby, uncouth figure, in the arm-chair, with the eternal cigarette between his fingers.

Carmer made no reply in acknowledgment of so much magnanimity. He was trying to imagine the moment when he should actually stand on the rostrum and repeat Dorval's words—and he failed. He could not call up that familiar scene: the Reichstag chamber, the concentric rows of seats, the glass roof. . . . He shivered as he realized that he did not believe in that moment. But he shook the feeling off.

"Thanks very much," he said at last. "Since you wish it, then, I will make you a speech on the present state of Europe, on all the things you know so much better than I."

"You are wrong, Herr Carmer, I repeat. You haven't an idea how much of it will be news to me. I am an expert in scarcely any field. Other people in France are that. Frightful, most of them are, too!"

"Well," Carmer slowly began, "when we

think about this Europe of ours—and for it—we are driven to confess that our continent has little left of its old position. It gave itself the name of continent, in the past it dealt like one. When it ceased to do so, then all was over. Now all its values are in jeopardy. What it must do is to take thought once more of its function, and call a little reason, a little tradition, to its aid. The clash is tremendous—always and yet again always the battle of Salamis has to be fought!”

Dorval, his head still bent, just lifted his lids. He said:

“Ah, that is how I like to see the game of politics played! Most of them talk about nothing but transfers and minimum tariffs.”

“I am coming on to them. The isles of Greece won’t be mentioned any more.”

“What a pity!”

“Ah, we shall mean Greece, even when we say tariffs. The story begins with the fact that today six millions of Europeans have nothing to eat. And these six millions are merely the dregs. For the others, the great majority, are only less wretched than they. Here in France they eke out an existence; in Germany they barely exist at all, not to speak of enjoying life.

Two-thirds of the German people are labourers and small employés with nothing before them but work to the end. Even of the minority, only the few have any money. Yet money rules."

"You may as well say that is why it rules. Money is scarce. So everybody dreams of having it. I had a chauffeur who left my service because I am not a millionaire. Nothing else the matter, he just wanted the smell of money—he adored it."

"This chauffeur of yours, Monsieur Dorval, is our poor Europe today. Its servility toward the New World has something touching and primitive about it. It is about to lay down its arms before the riches and the enterprise of the States. But the way the world looks today, material death is a death of the soul and the mind as well. This time the Persians are coming from the West to threaten the Mediterranean. And our Salamis has an uninspiring battle-cry: economic co-operation. Every undergraduate knows the formula. Instead of which, we are the proud possessors of twenty-seven tariff frontiers. Into seven-and-twenty pieces is this Europe of ours cut up. We are very far from the first beginnings of sanity."

"Far indeed. I expressed the hope lately that

we might some day be able to stop doling out your good drugs by thimblefuls in the French hospitals; of course all the experts bawled 'Utopia' at me. I can still hear them."

"They all need a dose of that kind of Utopianism. They are still capable of any folly—they tax the bread out of each other's mouths."

"True. It is Roumanian wheat, Italian maize, French wine—why not European wine, European wheat? Only in order that man can have a little harder time on this earth than nature has already condemned him to. A few profiteers will have it so and the people believe in eternal laws."

"Implicitly. With us in Germany they have just put up the bread tax. Nobody objected. Sometimes it is really very hard not to become a mystic."

"Every fight for improvement, Carmer, is a fight against empty abstractions that men have stuffed and paid homage to. One good thrust and the stuffing comes out."

"One has one's work cut out. Between such a mythology and our atavistic hate-mechanism we are all blind to our own best good."

"Twelve thousand millions of gold francs a year."

"What?"

"I say twelve thousand millions of gold francs is what the European states pay every year for armaments. The mob applauds. Rather not eat, only so we needn't stop hating. Eh? The whole underworld protests against that."

He uttered this word "underworld" with a grimace, all the abhorrence of the Voltairian spoke in the muscular contraction.

"It might not be such a bad idea to spend a little thought on how to save the world from horror and catastrophe. But no, far from it. Our lords and masters—to whom we are but silly dreamers—stare like bewitched at their fetishes: ore, oil, cotton, rubber. Rather than the abatement of half a per cent they would prefer to see silent cities with the skeletons of the survivors sitting bolt upright round the family table."

For the first time he had lifted his voice; suddenly it was possessed of resonance, life, and charm. And for the first time, strangely enough, Carmer was reminded of Achille Dorval the orator, as he

had seen him one crucial afternoon in Paris taming the rebellious Chamber. Sitting there, opposite this soft-spoken, almost disjointed old man, he had forgotten the most powerful, the most compelling parliamentary rhetorician in the world. He was hearing again the voice he had heard that afternoon, deep, firm, intoxicating, irresistible. He saw the Minister bend over the assembly, overshadowing reluctant hearers with his great angular form; saw him reach out his long arms as though to draw them bodily to him, then suddenly rear himself to his peroration, hammering away, with a metallic ring—yes, and the small, clumsy, womanish hand, turned into a ball of iron, pounded down on the desk, once, twice. Then silence. Everything had been said. The vanquished Chamber rose to him, and went mad.

It was but a moment. . . . He returned to reality, and saw Achille Dorval bending toward him. "You were in the war, Carmer?" he asked, in a subdued voice. "You were an officer?"

"Wildly enthusiastic officer. Not long officer. Not long enthusiastic. Right at the beginning my wife died, nursing in the field."

"Good God! She was young?"

"Quite young."

"Horrible," Dorval said. "That opened your eyes?"

"Not at all. Sacrifice was the keynote—so-called—of the whole war. No, I saw something quite simple. I saw a burnt-down village, with the corpse of a man, and a pig eating it. You know, Dorval, the human reason is weak—it is not enough, we always have to see corpses, and swine eating them!"

Achille Dorval got up. He wrenched his bulky body up out of the arm-chair. He stretched out his hands.

"We must never be calculating any more," he said, impressively. He sat down again.

"It will never come again," he said after a while. "We dreamers will prevent it. Let us dream, Carmer, let us dream mightily. But let us be careful not to dream on so vast a scale as others do."

"You mean England?"

Dorval did not answer. He fumbled in the inner pocket of his black suit and fetched out a crumpled paper. He unfolded it and held it between Carmer and himself. It was a small, rude map of the world, like one taken out of a school-book.

"I like to look at this," he said. "I amused myself with it today, when I was sitting on the milestone at that famous spot an hour away from Grenoble, fuming because I could not wire you. There"—he drew with his index finger a straight line across half the sheet, from Memel to the Sea of Okhotsk. "Our British colleagues must feel some pretty strong emotions when they look at that. There is a dream for you! Suppose all the countless millions settled on this vast continent, between the Baltic and the Pacific, were firmly united, not one subject Indian more, no Chinese serfs paying eighty per cent of their harvest to the owner of the soil. Suppose Asia were to become self-conscious. In London they reckon in continents and centuries, and our idyllic countries are only modest items in the total sum. You are one soldier against Moscow and I am another; there is nothing small about them—one must do them so much justice!"

Carmer let some seconds pass. Then he said:

"You, Monsieur Dorval, refuse to subscribe to that crusade. Yet I know you do not love Moscow."

"I am too old to love her. Age is usually the worst argument of all. But in this case I am old as France is old, and Germany. I've no patience with the

enthusiasm of those snobs who roll up their eyes when Russia is mentioned, but would be unhappy if they had to billet one of her citizens in their house. No, I do not want Moscow to come. I cannot want it. I am not harping on the economic gulf between western Europe and the eastern plains—though it exists right enough. But centuries are not so soon washed out of the blood of the race. In our lowest peasants, in your poorest labourers, still persists a lively need for detachment, for life as an individual. What the Frenchman and the German want is decent human correlation. None of us wants to be merged in the community. Oh, I am not fool enough to deny the magic that streams out of the Kremlin toward the weak and heavy-laden. The guilt rests with us, the leaders! Our hearts are dead. The word 'humanity' has become a catchword, a table-decoration at the feast. The word 'democracy,' too. It lies with us to give it life and fire again. Courage! Confidence and faith—Persia was shattered on democracy."

His left hand hung down still holding the little map of the world. "It all lies with us and with you," he said; "we cannot state that fact too simply or too forcibly. All over Europe presumptuous fools

are puffing out their cheeks and blowing up their little private storms. Verily, this is the time! Let us at least be at one, we hundred millions. Greece was smaller and weaker, in Xerxes' time. Yes, today they are coming from the West, with their money and their non-entanglement, they are coming from the East in one huge wave of collectivist uniformity. . . ."

Just then the wind blew the unlatched window wide; they heard a shrill blare of music and a burst of strident Negro song.

"And from there, too," said Dorval and motioned with his old head toward the window. "They are coming from that quarter, too."

CHAPTER EIGHT

BUT why should I speak?" cried François Bloch. His voice was lifted, it was almost shrill; and he spoke in faultless German. "My testimony is not needed. You have Goethe's own, and surely he knew something about his own language: he called German the poorest material ever an unhappy poet wrecked his life and art upon."

"Yes, and he had a right to say it," said Dr. Erlanger, in a deeper key, in rapid French. "He helped make the German language! A father may happen in a moment of impatience to blame his child."

"He knew what he meant! He had a Greek ear, your Goethe, he must have suffered at all your unnecessary consonants! Your German creaks and croaks and coughs—just try to imagine what Alcæus or Sappho would have said to such raw, hoarse, foggy sounds."

"But your Gallic, Herr Bloch, that they would have loved! An idiom pronounced through the nose! If we are hoarse, my friend, then your noses are stopped up. And then the hiccup at the end, with your accent on the last syllable! There's a clinical metaphor for you! Pindar would have died of the idea!"

"Your auxiliary words would have brought him round again."

"Our what?"

"A sight of the crutches without which you cannot walk. Your 'have' and 'be' and 'will be,' your 'must' and 'may' and 'might' and 'could' and 'would' and 'should.' And always, of course, auxiliary and participle as far apart as possible. He would have flung up his hands and shouted in despair: 'The verb, the verb!'"

"I can hear him, Herr Bloch, I can hear him: '*J'attends le verbe!*' For beyond a doubt he would have shouted in French. In your language, of course, there is nothing to wait for, you know it all already. What were your seventeenth-century grammarians thinking of—deliberately to hobble a language like that? To make it trot in harness, like a nag in a carrousel!"

Down there in the garden, in the nook among

orange and laurel, harmony, alas, had not reigned for long. Though no syllable of politics had been broached between the two young secretaries. They had exchanged desultory views, personal and literary, then passed to the question of language—and here, quite unawares, this heat of feeling, this furious and belligerent partisanship, had been struck up. Each fought for the value and beauty of a tongue in which both felt, thought, and wrote, as though he was defending the beauty of a fair lady in a mediæval tournament. Chauvinism like that, translated into the affairs of nations and states, would have meant danger of war at almost every turn.

And these two, strange to say, were "guests" among their nations, strangers on sufferance among those whose language and poesy they so burningly loved—spurious nationals, barely tolerated, often trouble-makers. A listener might have speculated whether such profound sympathy for a language—its store of common memories made vocal—is not rooted deeper than a mere equivocal blood-relationship is. On the other hand, who knows but the two antagonists might only have made themselves utterly suspect to a listener's ear? Each of them spoke far too

well the other's speech; they even, in the effort to make their meaning clear, kept exchanging sword and shield in the tourney, and voicing their hostility in the very idiom they attacked.

"Licence," François Bloch went on, still in German, "you approve of licence in language? Oh, yes, your German makes extensive use of it. You take a thought and twist it together into a period sixfold involved, simply because you want to say six things at once. You martyr the listener, the reader, you keep putting him off, making him wait till the last word for the solution and the release. Is not every German sentence a Wagner opera in little? The redemption comes, in the end. But first the long, long torments, the heaviness, tedium, and gloom."

"That's good—that is really *too* good. For what you say about Wagner, Herr Bloch, I won't go into that. Your very best have loved him. And even to reproach him—one must have loved him first! But as for the German language, you ought to take more pains to be fair, at least. It is true," he went on—and unconsciously spoke in French—"there is with us a wrestling with speech which to the French is en-

tirely foreign. The immeasurable, the metaphysical, presses for utterance, and yet can never entirely find relief in words."

"Ah, there we have it!"

"Yes, there you have it. It is a most touching effort, precisely because it can never succeed. But awe is the feeling due to the effort."

"Ah!"

"Yes, awe. Reverence before the power that overwhelms and makes us stammer."

"Stammer like a child or an ecstatic."

"Well, children and ecstasies are not such contemptible members of the human race. Though, of course, the 'language of reason' isn't in their line."

"Language of reason. Leave off the quotation-marks, my dear sir. Reason and clarity are no mean gifts, in our day especially they ought not to be despised. When you say reason, you mean poverty. I quite understand. Well, I am not blind. Our French is indeed poorer than your redundant late-German, poorer in material, that is. But what has it made of its poverty! In no tongue can one be more precise or adroit, apter or wittier. No other ranges its thoughts

in such logical order, so clearly, so naturally, none presents them to the hearer so ready for consideration. None is so convenient, none so polite. None is so humane."

"Ah, the large word! The largest there is!"

"Very well, then, we will avoid it. None is so universally adapted, let me say instead. That is its rank."

"The endless, the almost mystic richness of the German gives it a higher. In things of our tangible existence it may be unwieldy and stiff, may often take refuge in cloudy simile. But its every word is lit by starlight, not by crystal chandeliers."

"Starlight? Say rather lamplight. Your language and literature smell of oil. You are parlour revolutionists, you Germans. By which I do not mean that you never do any harm. When I think of your Lessing—"

"I was expecting that name."

"It had to come. He is a perfect specimen of the man who rides roughshod over distinctions. To make a mockery of law and order in the intellectual world—how easy that is, how cheap!"

"And Lessing, as everybody knows, adored

success. He was a riotous liver and he died a millionaire!"

"I am aware that he was poor. But, intellectually speaking, he was a libertine. Fancy not seeing the significance of the compulsion the masters of French drama put upon themselves! Not a notion what was the ground of that threefold unity; utterly mistaking that heroic necessity for law and limits!"

"But surely, Herr Bloch, you know whose discovery it is you are repeating? For naturally it had to be a German who could interpret so elegantly those tedious old pedants."

"Pedants? Tedious? And what German?"

"One who gave vent to such a rhapsody of exaggeration out of sheer pedagogic love to his own countrymen. Or do you seriously believe that the wanderer 'beyond good and evil' could really have cared for that leathery old Corneille of yours?"

"Oh, oh, oh!"

"We Germans reproach ourselves with foreign predilections, but we are wrong. They are only a form of self-criticism. And that, people say, is quite to seek, on the other side of certain borders."

"The other side of certain borders people are pretty comfortable, thank you. And they are right. While on your side—! Three quarters of your literature and all your philosophy is simply an expression of dissatisfaction with life."

"Perhaps we'd better not drag in philosophy, Herr Bloch. Or shall we? You insist? You, too, are supposed to have made your little attempts at interpreting the universe. The name of Descartes—"

"Oh, so you have heard of him—Descartes, who tore open the door!"

"Only, alas, the door on the wrong side. And who sustained that epoch-making defeat at the hands of Leibniz!"

"Monads! Pre-established harmony! '*Identitas indiscernibilium*!' The whole metaphysical merry-go-round!"

"Claptrap! Witticisms!"

"Oh, no. What was his message, what did he achieve?"

"Well, perhaps you may find the achievement in Kant, in his stupendous challenge of causality. Or who will satisfy you? Schopenhauer, perhaps, who first put the question of the value of existence?"

"A truly German question to put! And a quite superfluous one, since it simply is as it is, our existence, and the only possible question is how to arrange it a little more livably, a little more humanly."

"And so then we cannot escape a list of the Parisian moralists, the people with formulas for existence, from Montaigne down to Chamfort!"

"Certainly to Chamfort, whom your 'wanderer' called a truly European writer, one whom, had he written in Greek, the Greeks would have understood, whereas your Goethe—"

"Stop—stop!"

"I am only quoting. Your Goethe, the 'wanderer' thought, embraced the clouds rather more than is necessary; a Plato, he felt, would have shuddered at his obscurity and exaggeration, and then again his dry, dry places. . . ."

"Stop—stop!" Dr. Erlanger cried out again, in so imperative a tone that François Bloch did stop speaking, and looked at him in suspense. Obviously he was girding his loins for some surpassing, culminating last word. The magical radiance of that name must shed illumination, must make the cynic close his dazzled eyes in the silence of defeat. . . . Goethe.

. . . He strove after a formula. But he was too full. So he sat for long, saying nothing at all.

"Well, and Goethe?" François Bloch said at length, quietly, not without irony.

"I will tell you a story, Monsieur Bloch. A story is always best. A little story, out of a French biography. Listen. . . . You must imagine yourself in the northern part of your own country, in Normandy, in Rouen. There, on the left bank of the Seine, there is, or was, a street, a fine avenue with lofty trees, and beyond it the town with its towers. The time is 1837 or 1838, on a beautiful spring afternoon, Easter Saturday, in fact. A young man comes across the river from his lycée, school having just closed. It is young Flaubert. The fine head of flowing hair is bare; he wears a yellow coat, much too thin for the season, and wide, light-blue trousers. In his hand he has a book. He sits down on a bench there by the river and begins to read. His features change, he grows pale, the tears come, he has to wipe them away with the back of his hand. He reads on. The sun is almost down. Then from across the river comes the sound of bells, ringing for Easter. And that is too much for the poor young man; he is overcome by the harmony of

sound, giddy with the joy of this supreme beauty, the book falls from his hand, his eyes grow dim, he sinks down in a faint on his bench. They come up and carry him home."

"*Faust?*" asked François Bloch, softly.
"What scene? The Easter walk?"

"Second monologue. Flaubert tells the story himself. But remember, he read it in French—scarcely the same thing, is it: '*Annoncez-vous déjà, cloches profondes, la première heure du jour de Pâques . . . cantiques célestes, puissants et doux, pourquoi me cherchez-vous dans la poussière?*' No, it goes like this—"

"Like this," broke in Bloch, his lips twitching; he was pale as the student Erlanger had described, and in his emotion his German pronunciation suffered:

"*Welch tiefes Summen, welch ein heller Ton
Zieht mit Gewalt das Glas von meinem Munde,
Verkündigt ihr dumpfen Glocken schon
Des Osterfestes erste Feierstunde?
Was sucht ihr, mächtig und gelind,
Ihr Himmelstöne mich am Staube. . . .*"

Those "heavenly accents"—he might have gone blissfully on repeating them, who knows how

long? But a shrill outburst cut them short: the demoniac shriek of that primitive music, the very same exultant yell of the Afric Persians which had burst in upon the conference in the upper room.

M. François Bloch broke off. They looked at each other.

CHAPTER NINE

U

P there they were still talking. The dish on the table was full almost to the brim with Achille Dorval's cigarette-butts. Outside, it had grown perfectly still. A refreshing breeze came into the room. A greenish light showed above the sea. The ugly little bronze clock on the chimney-piece struck four peevish strokes.

They had long since begun to talk of immediate, tangible matters. It was hard to make progress. Almost every step was waylaid with spring-guns and man-traps. They looked into a forest, a thick undergrowth of popular prejudice; a weakling might well let fall his arms and despair of ever winning into the open and the sunlight.

They had talked an hour about boundaries, in particular of altering the map on the east of Germany; problems poisoned at every turn by the same

envenomed public opinion. It had been hard even to speak of them.

Still harder was it to talk about the occupation of the Rhineland. The conscientious guardians of public opinion took constant care that this silly symbolism should not cease to sear the German flesh; while in France there were always people to cling like grim death to the conviction that their country must keep her cavalry boot for ever on German soil.

Again and again, they went into weighty detail on the subject of indemnities, of yearly payments, sum-totals, and transfers—this although the face of the Continent and the world, economically speaking, changed greatly in the course of a single year, and no man in his senses could believe that such a tribute could be laid down over long periods of time and kept independent of the influence of an always inscrutable political future.

"It is all a question of confidence," Carmer said. "And confidence is immensely difficult for the vanquished, with the hard conditions imposed upon them. Suppose we begin to preach harmony and friendship? What will happen then? 'What about the corridor?' they will say, in my country. 'And the soldiers

in Mainz.' 'And the indemnities, the endless, enormous repayments?' You have not made it easy for me and mine to speak of peace. How shall they understand?"

"There is," Achille Dorval said haltingly, "no greater danger for the politician than to dwell beforehand on all the criticism and reproaches he will have to bear. It is inexpressibly hampering. With a pack like that, Carmer, we shall never march to the dawn. . . . Peace," he went on, "yes, peace is a queer word. You utter it, and nobody actually says you nay. They even agree with you, they drop their voices, as though you were ill. And at bottom everybody thinks you an imbecile suffering from a pathetic delusion."

"Oh, your job is easier than mine."

"You think so. Have you any precise idea what they think about me, our practical politicians and experts? The hands of the clock are turned backwards; and whoever wants to turn them the other way must be crushed with the famous cavalry boot. What, do I entertain doubts about our glorious colonial army, that herd of grey-skinned cattle they are training so that one day it can destroy Europe? Why,

aren't these thick-lipped gentry all good Frenchmen, haven't they helped save civilization from the country of Goethe and Mozart? Do I want to banish from the Rhine the occupation which is our only safeguard? As a matter of fact, it is not a safeguard at all, it is stupid and ugly and does harm. But the human spirit moves slowly, it is no further on than the year sixteen hundred, when the cavalry boot was still an argument. Oh, stupidity, Carmer, stupidity! It is a mighty power!"

"And mighty Proteus! It works for destruction under so many forms! Among us it puts on the mask of a profound and mystical soulfulness, which is to heal the world; with you it wears the colours of the secular church, which alone purveys the stock-in-trade of salvation. But the profiteer, the power-maniac, stands everywhere in the wings and grins. And he has reason to grin. The more dangerous and more harmful a given policy is for the people, the easier it is to persuade them to it. Look at us: Have we decent administration of justice? Social laws? Free education? Not a bit of it. We have filled the ears of the masses so long with a mystical patter that now they consider it beneath them to go after a near and

attainable goal. To correct that state of things we need you! How much we have need of that preponderance of the soul, that intellectual absolutism, that steady, methodical purposefulness—it may not work magic or carry people away, but it keeps on building and conserving! A little Hegel in our blood, a little Humboldt”—his pronunciation of the names was extraordinarily French—“and our hospitals, our laboratories, even our telephone bureaux”—a smile flickered across his face—“would be the better for it.”

He paused there, and went on, in a lower key: “It is my *idée fixe*, almost my monomania, Carmer. I think of nothing else. The day will come, it must, which shall make good the error of a thousand years, heal once for all this ghastly gaping wound in Europe’s side, and finally bring us together to save our great common inheritance. The time must come—no, it must be at hand—when no hungry swine shall ever feed again on a French or German corpse. That story of yours, Carmer, says it all. We have said nothing more. Let us think, let us keep on thinking. Nothing is more important. Never again, never again! Carmer, we shall march together step for step, but it may be we shall not again be able to talk as we have talked

tonight. There will be large and small decisions to make; our reporters will report a hundred interviews, all of them extra-special, of course; but let us never get lost in the immediate present, let us look beyond, straight ahead, and out and up to the light! We shall be attacked and reviled, each in his own country, mocked and befouled and spat upon—let us fear neither bullets nor vitriol—let us believe in each other!"

He broke off. Carmer was seized with a desire to spring up and fold the old man in his arms. But he was a German, he was afraid of being demonstrative. He did not even put out his hand. He only looked. And suddenly a thought pierced him like a sword, senseless and yet perfectly irresistible: that it would not be granted him to strive with Dorval toward this consummation. But why not—why? A curtain of thick night floated down.

"I cannot see," he heard Dorval say, as from a distance, "why we should suffer to all eternity, just because the sons of Charlemagne chose to behave like asses."

CHAPTER TEN

CARMER'S sleep was brief. He was wakened early by a pressing dispatch, to be delivered only into his own hands, against his own signature.

The ministry had fallen. The official dissolution would take effect today. Those officials entrusted with the formation of a new government offered Carmer the task.

He laid the paper aside and sat down at the wide window which gave on the sea, stretching away all blithe blue and silver in the morning light. Far off, like a toy, a steamer trailed a banner of smoke behind it.

Carmer breathed in the pure and sunny breeze. He thought about this new event. To himself he seemed strangely calm, far too calm, after last night's conversation and the solemn, fervent pact they had made. Of course, what had happened was only the long-expected.

But this utter stillness in his own breast, this remoteness and aloofness, frightened him. Was not this a great moment? For when should a man be glad if not in the hour that offers him the means to strive hopefully toward an idea he holds to be right? What womanish thought was this that assailed him as he looked at the fresh and sparkling expanse—as though he were not meant to leave these shores along which these last days he had been travelling; as though somewhere here on this ancient coast his path would end? Whereas nothing was more certain than that tomorrow he would leave it and travel toward the duties with which the blue paper yonder had entrusted him. Involuntarily his gaze sought it. But it was not on the table. The wind, blowing from Africa, had wafted it to the floor.

When he was dressed and the room in order, he sent for Dr. Erlanger. Dr. Erlanger came in haste, obviously roused from sleep. His joy was touching. "Don't rejoice too soon," Carmer felt impelled to answer him, but he was conscious that such a warning had neither reason nor sense. A telegram was written out and entrusted to the faithful aide.

Carmer had arranged to walk with Dorval at eleven. But when they came out of the crowded, whis-

pering hotel lobby and emerged upon the Croisette, they could make no progress. There was no disorder, nothing but nods and signs: at Dorval's appearance a wave swept through the long lines of idlers on the benches, the advancing stream of people divided, some folk took off their hats, so that Dorval at last carried his in his hand; they heard the unabashed snapping of kodaks. It was as though a man set apart by fame had no claim on the ordinary civilities of life.

"Just imagine if they knew who you are, too," said he.

This was the moment for Carmer to reveal his news; for he had not done so when they were in the lobby. A shyness hard to comprehend still held him back. He made no reply.

They left the esplanade and tried to walk along in front of the shops. But on the narrow pavement it was no better.

"We mustn't take it ill of them," Dorval said. "They are so inhumanly bored. What a lot in life, to be dragged by fashion from one resort to another!"

Carmer nodded. They made their difficult way along the row of low buildings, like booths, that housed the world-famous, legendary firms of Place

Vendôme and the rue Royale. Here were the dress-makers, the perfumers, the jewellers, of the surviving opulent. The window-display was governed by a singular taste: suggestion, isolation, barrenness—these were the very last refinement. A simple little frock lay tossed upon a background of sea-green velvet; very short, no more than a scrap of pale-grey stuff with a few black pearls sewed on the girdle—this, thanks to a convention past finding out, was the ultimate word in exclusiveness and luxury. In a perfumer's window lay a Chinese shawl and upon it a single flagon of golden liquid. These were the temples of the elect. This bald display exhaled a poignant snobbishness into the faces of the men as they walked.

The midday hours were the busy ones and brought in the profits. The females of the great capitalistic world were going in and out of these famous booths, more because it was the thing to do than out of enjoyment or a thirst for possession. They tried on, chose or rejected; the weary slave-drivers of the industry of the world followed meekly in their wake.

More than once, as the two men paused before a display-window, the customer within let fall the

costly trifle in her hand to peer out at Dorval, like a pretty animal in a crystal cage. He would smile, a rather embarrassed smile, and say, in a voice for Carmer's ear alone:

"No, thanks, my beauty. I should die of boredom."

"How so?"

"How so? Don't talk like a cynic, Carmer. No, when I was a young man, I might go off with a village girl after a dance and lay her gently down in the grass behind the inn—but that was different. Depend upon it, none of these women have any fragrance at all. That is why the golden bottle thrones it over there in the window."

Carmer smiled. But his smile was a little rueful. "Don't talk like a cynic"—ah, so remote was he from cynicism, his difficulty rather was to understand the allusion when this lively, easy-going old grey-beard joked so bluntly upon the most living of all themes. Yes, he himself was older than M. Dorval. He had grown old in a single day, the day of his frightful loss. Before he was forty. A stab of pain went through him, an intuition that it might be a sin to shut oneself off untimely from the pulsating

currents of life and love. Probably a very German sin.

At last they had begun to make headway. A few quick turns and cross-streets, and the quarter of elegant curiosity was left in their rear. Behind that extravagant façade on the sea-front the little southern town lived its modest life. "It's pretty here," Dorval said. Here too he was recognized. People came out of their doors and looked after the old man who was obstinately guiding the destinies of France in the direction of his idea. Not everybody wore a friendly look.

"I am not in the bosom of my family down here," said Dorval. "In these parts the war seemed very remote. What was there to be afraid of?"

"Mischief-makers can always find a reason," answered Carmer. "Where the war came home to them, they are not gentler for their memories of the suffering they went through."

"Yes," Dorval said, "it goes on ulcerating, in your country as in ours."

They had reached a narrow street where in every doorway flowers and fruit were on sale for little or nothing, a tenth of their price on the ocean front.

But none of those people ever came over here. Housewives in felt shoes stood haggling comfortably over a sou. Great sheaves of mimosa filled the air with strong, sweet scent.

A street sign bore the name of a marshal in the last war—they both chanced to see it as they turned a corner. "These city fathers simply wrote down the army-list—even third-class cavalry ranks have not been forgotten. Well, when a boy I was once in Berlin, and I could never find an address I wanted because I always mixed up the names of the Prussian generals. If you brand the human memory, you can make it remember. But weaklings who contribute such things as anti-sepsis or the laryngeal mirror aren't much thought of."

"On the other hand"—Carmer motioned upward with his glance: there was a sign bearing the name of Achille Dorval.

"Ah," said the old man, quite unmoved, "on the other hand, there are places where they put that up and took it down again. Old Dorval's stock went flat once more. Better so. Let them get rid of their cancer and then forget their physician."

When they re-entered the hotel, they found

the entrance hall crowded with curiosity-seekers. A little army of newspaper men from points on the coast had made all speed hither in the hope of finding the leader of France's foreign policy friendly and accessible in this holiday spot.

"We won't tell them anything, of course," Dorval murmured. "What is there to say?" And with a wonderfully gracious gesture he excused himself to the circle that thronged round him:

"I regret to have to disappoint you, gentlemen. I have taken two days' leave to see an old friend. I am sorry you should have given yourselves so much trouble."

"Oh, Monsieur Dorval," cried an English journalist, white-haired, slender as a stripling, with the tan of the tropical traveller, "we recognize your friend. We should so much like to . . ." Carmer heard his name murmured.

"Gilfond! I did not see you before." Dorval shook the white-haired man by the hand. "But you will hear nothing from me. I won't deprive myself of the thrill of your famous speculations. What sort of newspaper man would that be whom one had to tell things first!"

And seizing his advantage, he followed Carmer to the lift. The cameras snapped behind him, evidently pleased to have captured even so much as his broad back.

Up in Dorval's sitting-room, the scene of their last night's talk, Carmer went to the window. After a few minutes he turned round. "We might have told them something after all. The ministry changes today in Berlin. I have accepted."

"You learned that today?"

"Today. Early this morning."

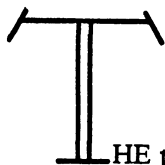
"And you did not tell me? You did not rush into my room? You take an hour's walk beside me and talk about the names of the streets? Well, hurray for Germany! But in heaven's name, tell me, Carmer, how shall we ever understand each other?" Then he added gently, with a smile that made his heavy old features brim over with charm: "Well, my dear fellow, I am very, very glad."

The telephone rang. From now on there was no respite. Continual requests for admission. The secretaries posted themselves on guard in the corridor.

"I make a suggestion," said Dorval. "There will be no pleasure here any more. In an hour, when

everybody is at luncheon, let us have the car at the back door. Bloch and your Erlanger will stop behind as a blind and follow by the night express. We will go by land, stop where we see fit, and have a nice, quiet, pleasant evening."

CHAPTER ELEVEN



HE powerful touring-car climbed the mountain by side roads. The man at the wheel, a solemn little Breton, wore with great correctness his summer livery of white with black facings. Carmer had changed his hat for a soft cap. But beside him sat Dorval, in the clumsy overcoat, the stiff round hat, the stick in his hand, a quaint and speaking protest against foppery of every kind, or dressing for the occasion. Involuntarily Carmer compared him with those pictures of the All-Powerful on the cathedral square at Ravello, one in full regalia, one in the steel helmet, one in the toga of the Cæsars.

They drove past acres of flowers; waves of strong scent, roses and hyacinth, welled across their route. They reached Grasse. Still stronger, more concentrated odors, almost intolerably strong, poured out of the perfume factories there.

"They mix their flowers with lard," said Dorval, and made a wry face.

"It's an offensive smell."

"It's a beastly stench!"

The road mounted among massive mountain peaks, across bridges audaciously flung, up and down narrow serpentine. The vegetation varied amazingly, almost from moment to moment. They rose from the region of the silvery olive up to the hornbeam and the northern pine, lifted a thrilling view of far-off mountains and out across the sea, then dipped down to stone-pine, myrtle, and orange, into warm valleys drenched with the scent of lavender and thyme.

Before Toulon they struck the coast once more entering the town close by the harbour. The quays were full of uniforms; and battle-ships, white and dark-grey and black, lay out at anchor.

"That is the most colossal stupidity of all," said Dorval. "Sixty million gold francs apiece. And a dreadnought like that, so the experts say, is about as much use in naval warfare as an old boot. Yes, those things out there, they are just as much use as though they were cast-off boots," he repeated, with a grim

sort of relish in the fancy, "and we won't stop harping on it."

Carmer looked at him. Absolute confidence spoke in the glance of those clear and merry eyes. Dorval had not, humanly speaking, much longer to live. In the small span still left him he could scarcely change or affect very much the feelings or the errors of mankind. Yet he was unvisited by a single doubt that it was the right and necessary course to stand fearlessly pointing toward the bright quarter of the horizon. In that attitude he already stood, in the world's eyes and for posterity's, like his own monument; with his faith in the present; simple, assiduous, undeterred.

Their road led close by the sea. On their right the mountains retreated in the declining day, they were lower and formed no shelter from the winds. But today no wind blew. The settlements they passed were not resorts, they displayed a simple, modest, blithe provincial life.

"We ought to stop somewhere along here," Dorval said. "Otherwise we shall be in Marseilles inside an hour, and you don't care to stop the night in hell, do you, Carmer?"

"In hell?"

"Well, a suburb of it, anyhow."

"In your France, you have suburbs to hell?"

"Oh, Marseilles isn't France. If it isn't a suburb of hell, then it certainly is of Africa. It contains the off-scourings of four continents."

A little bay had opened out, fringed round by a considerable village or small town. The half-circle of flat-roofed houses, blue, orange, or red, mounted by tiers on gently rising ground, overtopped by the church in monkish brown, with two square towers of unequal height, like fortresses. Fishing-boats with furled sails lay drawn up along the beach.

"Drive carefully, Philippe," said Dorval, and touched the chauffeur's shoulder with his cane. The little groups of people stepped out of the way. There was an aromatic smell, of sea-air, fish, and cookery. The waves were low, the heavens deep violet-blue.

"Yes, this would be the place for us," Dorval said again, "only there is probably no hotel."

But as though in answer the hotel came into view at the end of the row: a pleasing little yellow-ochre box of a building, set apart and slightly higher

than the others. A signboard brave in fresh paint hung on its front, with a splendid prancing white steed that obviously gave the inn its name.

The host and his wife came down and opened the door of the car, a homely, middle-aged pair, not of the Provençal type. But when they set eyes on the travellers, their mouths opened wide.

"Impossible!" cried both at once.

"True none the less, my friends. But if you mean well by us, keep the secret."

"Not a word, not a word to a soul. We are simply beside ourselves, aren't we, Denise? Oh, if monsieur only knew!"

"You mean you have no room?"

"No room? Denise, M. Achille Dorval asks if we have no room for him. Oh, monsieur!"

They were given the front rooms in the first storey, between whose windows swung the milk-white steed: large rooms of a pleasing emptiness, with gay wall-paper and a mammoth bed, and each with two cretonne-covered easy-chairs. They refreshed themselves after the journey and came out together before the house.

Two tables stood laid for dinner, with rough

but spotless linen and the long, delicious loaf. Scarcely had they sat down and begun to talk when their host came out, with sparkling eyes. Unable to contain himself longer he began:

"This is the best day of my life, monsieur. Both of us, my wife and I, do you know where we come from? From your native village, monsieur!"

Thus was the joyous stupefaction of the pair explained. Carmer too understood. "I come from his town," spoken of some famous man, that was like a brevet in this country, a perpetual nimbus and distinction. Even men long dead thus gilded others by their ray. In France sooner or later you were sure to meet a man who let you know, with beaming face, in the first ten minutes or so: "I am from Besançon, like Victor Hugo"—or from Valenciennes like Watteau, or Cahors like Gambetta. Vain and childish, perhaps, but still a sign of the lively connexion that subsisted between the nation and its representative men. And now, mine host . . . here in the flesh was the household god of his Breton home, descended bodily out of a car and seated at his table.

"You will see," said Dorval, as the beaming creature ran into the house again, "it will turn out

that I am his cousin. Everybody up there is a cousin of mine."

The peace fullest of evenings. The untroubled, tender-hued sea spread out before them, the sky grew pale; on their right, toward Spain, the sun was sinking in a glory of purple and faintest green. The colourful houses went down by tiers to the sea, each standing out in unreal brightness and clarity of line. Voices came to their ears: at the end of the row of houses a boat lay keel upward and two young men were working at it, with an occasional hammer-blow. It was still warm.

Here was their host once more, plates and forks in hand.

"I must tell you, Monsieur Dorval, I suppose you won't take it amiss, we are even connected with each other."

"You don't say! Cousins, eh?"

"Almost. But you won't remember, most likely. My father kept the Golden Head, and yours—"

He stuck there, confused, stricken with doubt as to the propriety of going on.

"Mine was an innkeeper too. But of course the Golden Head—that was an inn with a reputation.

Wasn't it on the Quai de la Fosse? Whereas ours, *bon dieu*, it wasn't much more than a baiting-place, a public on the outskirts, where the Rochefort road comes in. It was fine fun for me when I was a little chap; the coachmen from all over France came there in their elegant smocks. I saw all the breeds of horses there are, and learned all the dialects. . . . But come, my friend, let us have our dinner now. We are hungry—and this is a feast-day for us. You must show us the skill you learned of your father at the Golden Head."

"What will you have, Monsieur Dorval—and you, monsieur?"

"Oh, we have perfect confidence in you."

"There he goes," Carmer said, "with his head full of ideas. France makes everybody a gourmand. Take me, who hardly know the year round what comes on the table—and yet I am no ascetic—"

"No?" asked Achille Dorval, and the German laughed.

"Well, as for me, I like my food, Carmer, and I like my wine. I hope my cousin has a little Cassis—it grows hereabouts. These days with you are like bathing in the fountain of youth. I can march into the

future with a heart refreshed, like a young man, now that I can count on hearing your equal, steady tread on the other side of the Rhine. They won't recognize me, tomorrow in Nîmes: surely this isn't that doddering old Duval, they will say."

"You are speaking tomorrow in Nîmes?"

"Yes, in the Arena. An old engagement."

The *hors-d'œuvres* came on. A rosy-cheeked assistant helped the landlord to bring them, for they were a heavy burden, a perfect little landscape of dishes and plates, filled with fragrant or pungent morsels: clams, salt-water eels, snails, tunny-fish, olives, huge kidney beans, salted artichoke bottoms in vinegar, calves' brain, cold, with black butter, and on a large dish by itself the *morue à la brandade*, the codfish dish of Provence, cooked with pepper, oil, and a whiff of garlic.

"Do you smell the South?" asked Dorval. "Our host has become acclimatized. Do you mind it? To my mind, it belongs to the sun and the sparkling sea. Just between ourselves, I expect Plato and Alexander smelt pretty strong of it."

A lady came round the corner of the house. She was hatless and had a scarf over her arm.

"My lodger," the landlord said in a whisper, "the only one we have at this time of year. A very quiet, distinguished lady."

"We are sure of it," said Dorval.

The new-comer turned with an easy, graceful movement and looked across at her neighbours. She was used to being alone in the tranquil evening. Surprise rose in her eyes, she turned away at once, with the faintest blush.

"Do you like her?" Dorval asked in a whisper; without waiting for an answer—and none came—he got up, made a low bow, and in the voice no throng of people and no parliament had ever yet withstood, he said:

"Madame, it would be a pity for us to eat our meal in solemn silence, you on that side, we on this. Permit an old man to take a liberty: Will you not give us the pleasure of your society?"

She rose quite simply and without reserve, took the few steps between them, and offered Dorval her hand as she said:

"I know how to appreciate the pleasure you offer me, monsieur. I shall enjoy dining with you. My name is Mme. Grandin."

"May I present Herr Carmer?" said Dorval.

She sat down between them at the long side of the table, the house at her back, looking out at the sea and the sky.

"Ah, Madame Grandin," said mine host, pouring wine in her glass, "how often have I wondered how a lady like yourself can stand the monotony of this life down here. Now one evening will make up for it all. I am delighted."

She thanked him with a smile. She was scarcely young, as she sat there, and it was hard to say if she might be called good-looking; her features were perhaps too capricious for that, the small nose had too whimsical a line, the gentle mouth was a little too large. But there was real charm, there was fascination in the round, childish brow and the long, grey, dark-lashed eyes which had kept the expression of her early days. In the declining light her skin looked fresh, but when the tapers came, in tall wind-glasses, their brightness showed the first signs of age lying over the features like a delicate, fine-meshed net. She was dressed with utter simplicity, yet charmingly too, in a frock of very thin pale-grey wool, girted with a narrow strip of green leather. Its supple weave betrayed the

movements of her straight, broad shoulders, her womanly arms, her breast that one divined still kept its loveliness. The waving brown hair was parted on the side, with a single lock that would escape to fall into her eyes. And like a perfume, like an exhalation of her personality, was her air of understanding, her gift of native good sense and high spirits, as yet only just shadowed by the resignation of middle age.

She ate with enjoyment and no exaggerated delicacy of the good things their blissful host set out for his famous guest: the soup, with its aroma of blended seasonings; the lordly salt-water barbel, gleaming scarlet on its dish.

"Do you realize, my friend," said Dorval, "that an ancient Roman would go frantic with joy at this sight? They liked nothing in the world so much as this fish. They would travel any distance to get it."

"And yet I doubt if any of those ancient Romans could dress it as I can. Pray try the sauce."

"Langouste, is it not?" asked Mme Grandin.

"My invention, madame. It is a success, isn't it?" and he was off.

"We are laying the fat of our land at your feet, monsieur," she said to Carmer with a smile,

"but you hold back too much. You will make the poor good man unhappy."

"He will think me a savage, without understanding for these things, and so be consoled. How could I explain that the finest morsel of all to me is just a piece of this white bread dipped in his wine? All the riches of France in a single mouthful. If you permit me, madame, I will do that very thing."

"So must I," said Dorval. "Carmer, you are right. Wine of the uplands and wheat of the plains. The little Cassis is good, eh?" He looked lovingly at the amber liquid in the coarse glass.

"Yes," Carmer said, "it tastes of sun and stone—pure and bitterish."

And he scarcely went further than his devotion to the bread and wine, as their landlord continued to serve up his banquet: asparagus the thickness of two thumbs, with no woody stem at the end; young chicken in cream, with tender salad; lastly the other salad as a sweet, made of fruits that smelled like the garden of Eden: cherries, melons, peaches, and pears, for all flavouring just moistened with a pungent liqueur.

The meal was so little cloying, so light, what-

ever justice you did to it could but leave you the lighter and better. "And yet," Carmer thought, "this is only a village inn; it is hard to believe that our host is a greater master of his art than a thousand others. And after all, is not such pure and delicate food a better nourishment and more beneficent than many a burden of thought and dignity? How genially he sits there, that great old man; not overfed with all the good things, not over-heated, and makes his jokes—not with any lordly condescending, either, but quite free and easy. And who may she be, who is so serenely equal to this occasion? Hard to tell; she may be a lady of rank and family, she may be lower middle-class. The easy way she lifts the spoonful of fruit-juice to her lips is surely common to them both. How naturally she listens and laughs—quite unassumingly, yet without any false humility! She feels at home, simply because she is a woman—and a woman never needs to prove herself, simply the gift and charm of her presence give her as much excuse for being as the tried and tested man can have, even this great old man himself. How gently and sympathetically he talks to her; and the language is so completely their common possession! They all speak it so well and without any am-

biguity; each sentence is really a sentence, that is the way they talk, the way their tongue gives it them to talk—not as though speech were a dissolving cloud soaring away up to the stars, or a great spade rooting up the kingdoms of the earth for treasure; but just a beautiful instrument adapted for life. Live, live, that is what they do, and with a good conscience. Anyhow, she is delightful. She shares her favours, unconsciously as it seems; gives me a friendly glance: this stranger who does not talk or know how to enjoy his food must not be allowed to feel shut out. She is cordial and approachable out of sheer decency and fine feeling. For she does not sit here talking for herself alone, she sits and speaks for all the women of France—so easily, so easily; and when she looks at me, as she did just now, as though she liked my looks, middle-aged though they are, I must not take it to myself, it only means she does not want me to be sad. But I am not sad, Madame Grandin, not sad at all, or at most only sad on general grounds: because life is past and gone—one may still make use of it, but scarcely rejoice in it any more.”

It had grown cool after all. Dorval helped her put the scarf about her shoulders.

"Yes," she said, "when that star comes out, then there is always a chill in the air."

"And looking at that star is your amusement, evening after evening? Our host is right to be surprised."

"Yes, he is often kind enough to chat with me. He has spoken of you, Monsieur Dorval. It seems he was born in your part of the world. He has told me that nine times. I have been here ten days." She went on, more seriously: "I had hoped to bring my little son—he is not so little, really, he is thirteen—but it was too dear. And I so needed a holiday. I was worn out."

"You work in Paris?" asked Dorval, respectfully.

"Yes. With no great pleasure. I find it horrid. But if one must, one must. And just at the beginning of—when my husband died—"

Involuntarily the two men bowed their heads. They perfectly understood of what it was M. Grandin had "died," and both felt in a sense responsible.

She glanced from one to the other. No words were needed. When people fall silent like that, they

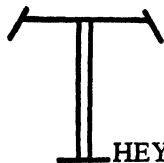
are all thinking the same thought. For some minutes no one spoke.

Then all at once she raised her arm and stretched it out toward the night sky, where the stars gleamed like lamps.

"Let's cover it up," she cried. "Cover that star up there, I mean. We will not look at it any more, that hideous red eye!"

And with her small steady hand she shut out the planet Mars from their view. But between her fingers, that bore traces of the needle, the light from milder stars gleamed whitely.

CHAPTER TWELVE



HEY started after midday and reached the suburbs from the land side. The car bumped slowly over a haphazard pavement full of holes. No one turned out, no one kept the rules of the road. Dog- and donkey-cart stood out across the street. Ancient crippled automobiles, cobbled together, filled with bare-headed women and men in shirt-sleeves, went past, hooting signals which nobody heeded.

The suburbs went on and on. The low, gaily coloured houses sprawled out as though ground were plenty, as though desert or prairie extended on every side. And they all had a casual, temporary air; some even without doors, only a red or green curtain hanging limp in the motionless air. In front of them sat their occupants, stark idle in broad daylight, screaming, laughing, gesticulating, with a violence and abandon that seemed almost lunatic. A yellow, evil-smelling

dust whirled about among the vehicles, the sun beat pitilessly down. A heavy numbness came upon Carmer, he felt as though fever were setting in. For the first time in their drive Dorval pushed back his stiff felt hat; the inside band was burning his skin.

"Could you believe," he said, "that we left our little haven only two hours ago, and Mme. Grandin and my cousin, and the white horse?"

At last they reached the railway station. Here Carmer deposited his hand-luggage; his trunks had gone on with the secretary. The train for Germany would not leave before evening—hours hence.

They drove through the heart of the buzzing, droning city, and stopped at a cross-road. On their right ran the broad avenue, black with cars and people; on their left was water, a basin cut into the shore, full of tackle and masts. And in front of them a third road slanted up the hill, the rue de la République, which Dorval was now to take. A little further on it turned off and dropped downhill, going into the heart of France.

Carmer stood at the edge of the pavement and took off his hat. Dorval laid his own awkwardly on

the seat beside him and reached out both hands to Carmer over the door.

"*Alors!*" said he, and looked his ally in the eye. His eloquent mouth stood slightly open under the frayed moustache. Then the car went on, up the steep road. Dorval had turned round—with his whole body he turned, his neck being probably too stiff—and waved. Soon he was scarcely visible. He held his cane in the air, as high as he could; the handle glittered. The car gained the summit, it started down the other side; the last thing Carmer saw was the silver handle flashing in the sun—a greeting and a gleam.

He strolled the few paces back to the main street. This was the famous Cannebière: here the dark hordes broke in, this was the soil they trod on landing, those hungry thousands advancing on Europe. And Europe received them, with huge cafés, with *variété* and cinematograph, and shops where the choicest articles of luxury lay jumbled together with tinsel and gewgaws calculated to please a barbaric taste.

Here the sailors, marines, and soldiers of France's wide-flung colonial army walked up and down, in groups or singly, some in khaki, but many still in the traditional red: the zouave in red trousers

and fez, the African Rifles in the red scarf with a veil to protect the neck from burning suns; the Spahi in red jacket and mantle, with the Arab hood over his head. The Cannebière was splashed and sprinkled with blood-red. These subject races were of every complexion, all the yellows of Cambodia and Annam, the blacks of Niger, Logone and the Congo, the browns of northern Africa. And they all seemed to feel at home at once. In the press ahead of Carmer swayed a gigantic old Berber, supported by two tiny, very elegant *cocottes*, giggling, teasing, snatching at his burnous. He looked down at them without speaking, a sombre, heavy desire in his eyes. Carmer suddenly realized that he had been following and watching this group. He stood still at once, puzzled and annoyed, and looked about for a vacant place before one of the cafés. He still had hours of waiting before him.

The feeling of numbness would not be shaken off. He craved a physical stimulant to help him get rid of it, ordered a stiff drink, and took it off hastily. It tasted highly and complexly spiced, with a rather disgusting after-taste, like rubber. But it had the required effect.

Ceaseless rattle of talk all round him, loud,

rapid chatter with a singsong accent, in tortuous and obscure dialect. In a series of shrieks they discussed business, politics, women. Every table was animated, the hot air was cleft by a flourish of gestures. A dark-brown people this, with blazing eyes, pronounced colouring, features that were regular and even noble, though constantly distorted by their play of grimaces. It was as though here were something rare and precious, half-obliterated by shifting filth. But what was it?

The café was supplied with entertainment. The beggars and buffoons of the harbour city were performing for the amusement of the idlers round the tables; and such merciless misery and disease were here on view as Europe nowhere else brings them forth. An old Negro with bushy white whiskers displayed his hands to show the phenomenon of the *kefussa*: the pock-marks on the backs showed blue-grey beneath the skin, but greenish under the pink palms. He held them out with a grin of pride at the fatal distinction. Nobody heeded. Then a boy, a forlorn and impudent mongrel, came by, with burning slits of eyes and harsh stringy hair; on his shoulder perched a little monkey with a fez and toy sword. The monkey was trained to sit up and salute; but after each rendition of his trick he was

seized by a consumptive cough, and as he coughed held his thin hairy hand before his mouth in a heart-rendingly human gesture. The boy coughed with him. Nobody cared. An almost brutish callousness was in the air. Carmer heard it in the hard, heavy accents of this gabble round him. The total lack of pity or concern was so oppressive that it drove him to bestow his mite by stealth on the pitiful pair.

He felt wretched. The sensible course would have been to seek a hotel, take a night's rest, and proceed the next day. But—they expected him up there. Tomorrow he would be sitting over documents at his writing-table, in a German party headquarters. The thought made him feel faintly ironical—with an irony that was near to cynicism. But he still sat; and when the waiter passed with his bottle invitingly lifted, he beckoned and took a second strong liqueur like the first.

Among the city's wretched the military seemed to be trump. For the next cripple and mendicant had arrayed all there was left of him in a uniform. He was legless, and sat in a little low wagon far down among the knees of the pedestrians. On this little wagon he had mounted his organ, a modern mechanical one.

There was no handle to turn; he sat with crossed arms while it played, a centaur of man and machine.

He wore the field-grey coat of the French infantry, with yellow facings on the collar, where the regimental number 103 was still legible, and the straight-cut field-grey cap with a broad peak. Beneath it his face looked fresh and normal, with small lively eyes, red cheeks, and a dashing moustache—quite as though its possessor could get up with the rank and file and shake a leg with the best.

"Chassez-moi donc cette orgue de Barbarie!"

It was the proprietor who shouted, a nervous, futile man, standing about among the tables. The waiter to whom he spoke was too busy, the centaur droned on. Carmer knew the piece, had recognized it at once, with disproportionate surprise and, yes, with pleasure. It was that fashionable jazz from the Casino at Cannes, sombre, brooding, oppressive, suddenly rent with whistles and shrieks, like lightnings in the night. The whole scene came back: the wild Negro orchestra, the rich of this earth sitting there weary unto death; the dusky enchantress and queen trampling on their dignity with her bare brown feet—and his own painfully controlled, disconcerting emotions.

Today they would have been even harder to control. He listened. He was waiting for that imitation of the human voice, that parody of universal longing, so exasperating in such a setting, and yet so heart-rendingly sweet, which he knew must rise in a moment out of the hubbub of sound. It did not come. There was a defect in the record. The machine went whirring round, then the brawling set in again as before.

"Chassez donc enfin cette orgue de Barbarie!"

A curious word. Carmer did not know it, he gave it the wrong meaning. To him it was just as though here and today it had been used for the first time, and in its proper sense. The organ of the barbarians. They fell on it now in good earnest and it scuttled away. Carmer looked about him again among the gesticulating, chattering crowd.

It was true. These people had a right to speak of barbarians. For they were Greeks! This full, round chin, the way the hair grew, the straight line from the top of the forehead to the end of the nose. Choked with rubbish, half-buried beneath a foreign deposit—one had to excavate, as it were, the component parts, but they were there.

And so they must be, Carmer thought at once. This city here in the west, at the point where his own route left the sea—Greeks had founded it, Greek culture had flourished in its shrines. And when Athens erected the Parthenon in honour of Pallas, she had sent for sculptors from this Massilia, that the dwelling of the clear-eyed, the wisest of goddesses might be worthily adorned. There was a rightness about this brow, this little chiselled ear. They stood up out of the swelling tide of darker races like the last marble reef.

Carmer rose. The sun must be near setting, but there showed no sign of coming coolness. The air brooded heavily above the crowded street. He felt impotent, insecure, incapable of resisting the weird, malignant spell of this city that was not Europe. There still lay time before him, enough to take a walk down by the water, where he could see the masts of ships, in search of refreshment before the night journey.

Then, as he was paying the waiter, Carmer suddenly and quite distinctly heard his name called; his given and last names, with a foreign accent, but recognizably. A mistake, of course.

As evening came on, the crowd had grown even denser. The hordes of dock labourers swarmed out of their sheds into the city at the close of their day's work. They sauntered in rows along the street, a riotous mixture of races. Easily aware of their power, they made everybody step aside and held up the cars and carriages on the road. The first electric signs had flared up, yellow and red, flecking the street as though with blood. Then once more Carmer heard his own name.

It was the news-venders. They were posted at every corner, they pattered along the gutters and cried their evening wares: "German Cabinet fallen"—and then his name. Hands clothed in coat-sleeves, hands reaching out of burnouses, clutched for the papers, everywhere brown and white sat bent over the news. His own name followed Carmer as he walked away. He heard it incredulously, almost with vexation: it was fixed, then, that he must travel—must he, then, only because they were all shouting this? The stream of idlers parted a little further on, and he saw, scurrying like an insect along the ground, the centaur pushing down to the water before him.

Down there no one called Carmer's name. It

was fairly quiet. He turned on his right hand to the deep narrow bay that indented the shore, and walked along its length. In the background, facing him, a huge iron spider-web extended: the strands of a suspension-ferry connecting the two shores.

But there was no breath of air. The water of the Old Harbour lay oily smooth and befouled. Only small vessels anchored here. Their sails hung limp. There was no current—and there was an evil smell.

This pool, then, was to be his final glimpse of Mediterranean waters. Here he should take last leave of the sea whose morning brightness had sparkled between Poseidon's dwelling and the sirens' seat; whose shimmering distances his eyes had followed all these days. . . . But now their gaze was drawn away by a glittering.

Beyond the basin lay huts and sheds, and beyond them still the modern working city with its chimneys, already lead-colourless in the dusk. But high above on the white rocks, where the sun no doubt greeted it earliest and left it last, the great golden statue of Notre Dame de la Garde glittered and blazed. It was not recognizable as an image from here, rather

as a greeting and a gleam glancing down into the narrow streets. Once before today had he been thus saluted: by his last glimpse of the old Voltairian, the great old man going back to his Europe. With a smile, Carmer turned away.

On his side of the bay the old city climbed the hill, a huge silent fortress in the oncoming twilight. Carmer did not know what sort of life hid away behind these masses of stone. Nor had he observed that police were holding the neighbourhood in force. His thoughts striding onward, he strode too, passing unheeded a last cordon. Armed men in kepi and pelerine stood diagonally across the road with their faces turned toward the quarter Carmer was now entering. They stared after the well-dressed man and two of them exchanged looks.

A little further on the legless man was seated on the ground at the water-side, with his meal set out before him on his organ: small fish, bread, a little bottle. He ate and drank, a lonely bachelor, reading from a newspaper in his left hand, by the light of a street lamp that had just come on. Carmer stopped and made good his neglect of the morning, he laid a piece of money gently on the creature's machine. As

he did so, his eye fell on the paper and he read his own name. The centaur glanced up under his infantry cap, lifting his fresh-coloured face to Carmer. He uttered no word of thanks, he continued to chew; but as Carmer passed on, the other pressed a button and gave out a few chords of his dismal lay. Carmer heard it behind him like a mocking grunt.

Beyond, the rows of houses broke off and there was a little square, already rather shadowy. A wide-spreading stone-pine stood there, some shade-trees, and a fountain in the middle. It was like a village square. At last a little breeze had risen, the tree-tops swayed slowly, with a promise of cooler air. Carmer crossed the street that ran parallel to the shore and betook himself to this refreshment. He sat down on a bench, close by the fountain's ripple and splash. It was quite still. He saw no one. Weariness encompassed him, he closed his eyes and gladly surrendered to the half-slumber he felt coming on.

Silence was all about him, gentle coolness and mild evening light—this with lids closed on the outer scene. He was back in his boyhood, sitting at the lofty window of an old room. He felt behind him its scholarly peace, even while his gaze sought the planted

courtyard, with its leaping fountain, the tall tree-tops, the terraces, and the level open Neckar valley beyond. For this was not his bald, flat Northern Germany, it was a scene from his student days; he knew directly where it was he sat, at a window of the library in the Swabian university town. Yes, far beneath him was the avenue, the river glittered, on the horizon billowed the gentle hills, abundantly green, yet not exuberant. Here was the fitting home of a frugal, blithe, and earnest race.

Here in thy valleys first was my heart awaked
To life, thy lapping waters encircled me,
And never a hill beloved of thee,
Rover, hill-lover, to me is a stranger.

The lines came into his mind. But it could not be he, son of the rude plain that he was, who spoke them. Rather they must be murmured by those he felt behind him in the cool Gothic library, their young heads bent over their books—Swabian heads with musing eyes and wilful brows. Then he saw, with a heart-easing smile, that he was not alone at the window: another sat beside him on the ledge looking out on the soft yet brilliant scene: one long departed, never

seen in the flesh, yet long familiar—and this was his song as it could be no one else's:

And oh, ye beautiful

Isles of Ionia! Where the sea-air

The burning beaches cools and through laurel groves

Goes whispering when the sun lies warm on the vine—

Ah, in these isles what golden autumn

Turns for the poorest to song their sighing!

Yes, it was he, the poet, seer, and dreamer, who embraced in one single feeling Greece and his native meadows and with burning vision pierced through to the essential things. A slender stripling in his black scholar's gown, with the white collar flung open wide; the radiant young head leaned on his arm that rested on the century-old window-ledge. Light hair topped a lofty brow that arched above the eyes' mild beam, the lines of mouth and cheek were tenderly drawn. His look was fearless, yet without a hint of the harshness of life; unswervingly sincere, profuse with feeling, profound in knowledge and a noble longing, crowned with wise and lovely eloquence.

Carmer opened his eyes. He was not alone. On the bench beside him sat a mute. Not mute alone

because he did not speak, but because quite literally he was clothed in silence.

A full, dark travelling-mantle muffled him from head to foot, nothing showed but one black-brown fist in his lap. An indigo-blue cloth was wound about his head and face and fastened in a thick knot at the back. No eyes were visible, no forehead, no mouth. He must have come from some remote and desert place where a forbidding cult shrouded the features of its children to protect them from fine sand. He might be a Tibbu or Tuareg from the wild Ahaggar country or one of the great clay villages of Africa, or perhaps from Timbuctoo, the "belly-hollow," where caravans meet on their hundred-day marches, and their camels overtop the windowless houses in the gloomy streets. On the arm next Carmer the veiled man wore a band of some green stone, with a very wide, high cutting—it looked more like a shield than an ornament. A lightless fortress he sat there.

He seemed to be waiting, just as—Carmer had only now become aware of it—others were waiting also. Two sailors were slowly walking up and down together without exchanging a word. A black stoker or dock labourer, with long, hanging, apeline arms, stood

leaning in the shade against the trunk of a plane-tree. He too was waiting. The whole square was like an antechamber.

With a rustle of his garments the dark man got up. At a little distance he stopped and turned round. Carmer knew he was looking at him through the blue veil, and he followed. The wise, the clear-eyed one, the gifted with eloquence, sent never a whisper to hold him back.

A broad side-street opened. It ran parallel to the shore and must lead back to the inner town. It was, in fact, Carmer's shortest route to the station. But he blushed at his own disingenuousness: not because this man showed him his reasonable route did he follow. He followed. Followed, and was in hell.

Already they were advancing on him out of their holes, that bordered the street on both sides. The buildings were towering and dark, the ground-floor of each yawned open like a wound. These were not living-rooms, but dark, low-ceiled kennels, each with a rude bunk covered with a horse-blanket. There were no doors, only ragged curtains drawn back. In the open space they crouched and waited for men. There were men whose lust all this could serve.

These creatures were half-naked, or grotesquely dressed in long smocks of garish colours or perhaps in a spangled skirt and tattered scarf. All their luxury consisted in filmy stockings; shoes were almost unknown. They scuffled about the filth of the street with their feet wrapped in woolen rags, screaming out prices that elsewhere in the world are asked for a loaf of bread or a few cigarettes. Nothing that breathed could show less human. And these, one saw at once, were thousands. This was no out-of-the-way corner, not one small quarter, but a tract of horror and death, so entrenched that it escaped attack; where any cancer-knife must cut in vain, since the growth would only spring up again worse than before. He stood at the entrance of an inferno reared up out of the drifted scum of the world. It had been caked and crusted here for centuries, perilous and poisonous as nowhere else on the surface of the earth; here all the dark forces of barbarism lurked to attack civilization—and himself.

They surrounded him now by dozens. A well-dressed man was an alluring morsel flung into their basin—the fish darted for it in clouds. They snatched at his clothing, one of them tore off his hat and ran away with it in triumph, hoping he would follow

and be trapped in her lair. The thought crossed his mind how poor she must be to find it worth stealing. Willingly he let it go. Further and further in. But further he did not get. The word had gone through the lines of brothels, the whole street had seen that a prize was at hand. They barred his way in mass. The other street, then. He turned, and, behold, a phalanx surging toward him on their rags.

He stood still and looked. Overpowered by a fresh impression. He was gazing into a filthy crucible of race. A glance at these dregs of a seaport town betrayed a population bred through time from the migrated military, and perniciously interbreeding. Every face was a hybrid and a caricature. Each had something of all. Especially as to the eyes. Here was one with the mossy, matted hair of a Negress growing above a high forehead, the eyes long and wide open, the nose a Jewish beak, the skin livid. Another had the almond north-Asiatic eye above a Bantu snout; a third the round skull and grey skin of some pygmy stock, together with the light-blue eye of the North—one eye, the other being closed by disease or a cuff. There were dozens of them. They shrieked at him in mutilated tongues, they blew their deadly breath into his

face, they barred him off from the square with the plane-tree and the fountain. He looked back at it. He could have escaped. But he did not go.

His shrouded guide had long since disappeared. Carmer walked on alone. They kept slipping up noiselessly round him like shadows from a nether world. Some of them dropped weakly back; they seldom left their holes, a hundred steps exhausted them. One after another disappeared, beckoned by a purchaser. A curtain dropped.

The men who lived here were soldiers. Their blood-red flashed in the leaden twilight. Not one civilian coat, hardly a workman's blouse. They dwelt here with these creatures burgeoning in their filth; lived on their earnings, protected them; sank slowly lower and lower; and mingling entirely at last, begot their kind. They were lounging in all the corners: deserters, demobilized, refugees from one service or another, in forage-caps, in blue coats, in red capes, in puttees—all refuse of the war, all splinters of the fearful weapon with which Europe was committing suicide.

A street opened on the left, he struck into it and was not followed. These shadows seemed confined to their quarter. Was there a law of the wild,

that forbade one animal to encroach on another's feeding-ground? But they pursued him with incoherent yells.

This street was steep and narrow, a gulley winding upward around the hill. Along it gaped curtainless hole by hole, showing buyer and seller locked in their embrace. Between were drinking-dives, where legionaries and the coloured sprawled drunkenly with dangling arms. Carmer hurried on, followed by threatening and scornful glances. Grey old crones in shapeless sacks waddled behind him praising their wares with toothless gums—praising even themselves! But at his left the row of houses ended and he saw an outlet, dark and still.

He paused, and drew a deep breath. Slowly his numbed senses cleared. Here the inferno seemed to end. Away, then, upwards on the mountain-side, into clean air!

Then he saw—had already seen—that this was not an exit, but a cul-de-sac, a long, deep courtyard cut into the stone walls. They rose again before him. In front of Carmer stood a woman, lighted by a broad ray of red light from the door she had just opened.

She looked toward him. When she saw him about to turn away, with one gesture she swept her wide loose garment downward and bared her breasts. They were beautiful.

"Come," said she, in a clear, ringing voice, in a French that was foreign. "Come. Young, beautiful. Not much money."

And as the stranger came no nearer she persisted: "Father a king. *Hova! Hova!*" She repeated the words several times, as though it had some very special and compelling significance—the name, perhaps, of her tribe or caste.

Carmer was driven to look at her. She stood there for the dark and the unknown, the hostile to his strength of purpose. And she was beautiful, alluring, not like those other lemurlike shadows—ah, no. She might indeed be a high-born native of that happy, fruitful, forest-crowned island which torrential currents divide from Africa, while milder waters link it with India and Arabia.

It was the mingled bloods that made her lovely. She had little of the Negro and much of the Malay. Tall and pale-bronze she was, with simply waving hair and deep dark eyes whose gaze was innocently

young. And she was almost a child, perhaps fifteen years, and cast adrift on this inhuman shore.

"*Hova! Hova!*" she said again, pointing to the necklace that hung across her naked bosom. It was of other origin than the infamous cotton stuff of her cheap chemise. It was composed of square carven beads of transparent horn, linked together in a way that suggested a cult. Looking at it called up before the eyes a bronze figure lying in prayer upon a mat before its rush-covered hut.

Carmer shook his head with a smile and half turned round, incapable of flight. He felt a wave of sensual sweetness, a paralysing desire for this bronze young creature. Here was the ultimate peril of this heavy day; he surrendered to it, he willed to surrender.

A tall, woolly-haired, grinning Negro had sprung noiselessly out of the earth and barred his way. He was so tall he towered above Carmer, though standing lower in the sloping courtyard. He wore the *monteur's* outfit and square cap of the dock labourer, but his face was savagely marked in native fashion: narrow strips of skin had been cut out on both cheeks, and three deep furrows, blood-red against the black, ran parallel from temples to chin. He held his right

hand—presumably with a weapon in it—behind him, and with his left pointed persuasively at the stranger's chest, where the wallet might be supposed to lie.

"Your money!" said he, in English.

"Get out!" said Carmer, more astonished than angry at this adventure. "Be off with you!"

He looked round mistrustfully for cover. The beautiful young creature would fling herself on him now, cling round his neck from behind, and make him her prey. That was the plan. But she stood motionless and expressionless, an innocent riddle, out of all proportion alluring. The man with the scars brought round his right hand, he grimaced as he lifted the knife.

It was a beautiful knife. Carmer had time to see that. The blade was flame-shaped, broad, two-edged, with a very sharp point and a groove in high relief in the middle for the blood to run down. No dull manufactured product from Sheffield or Solingen, but an aboriginal specimen from the Niger or Ubangi, a prize for a museum.

The giant drew near. The brown mucus of his eyeballs glittered, he gave out his rank smell. The weird, incredible character of the encounter went far

to paralyse Carmer's strength. He pulled himself together. And swiftly, unexpectedly, with flawless technique, caught his assailant under the chin, and he collapsed like a pile of boards. He fell against the house wall and sat there on the ground with his back to it, an extraordinary figure, staved in, with head and torso dangling forward.

Carmer felt a soft touch at his back. He turned. She was there. She offered herself again but not as before, looking at him with an upward, appealing look, and parted lips. She gave out a faintly bitter fragrance, like almonds or exotic woods. Her firm bare breasts stood out. He flung his arms about her and bent and sought her dark mouth and was lost. In that kiss Carmer died.

His murderer had stolen forward; he almost stumbled over the Negro's legs, stooped, and snatched up the knife the other had let fall. He stepped behind the two standing there in their embrace and measured Carmer's back.

He aimed with cowardly deliberation and thrust the flame-shaped blade with all his strength under the left shoulder-blade.

His victim lifted himself from the embrace,

flung up his arm, swung round, tottered, and fell head first to the ground.

The African lay still dazed. The lovely one was gone, frightened by a shove and a curse back into her lair. The murderer stood alone, at Carmer's head, waiting for his last breath to rob the body and hide it.

He was a white man, and young, with a broad, fair face, dull blue eyes, and a shock of dull blond hair beneath the cockade of a peakless soldier's cap. The cap he had from one army, his blue zouave jacket from another, from a third his belt. He held the primeval knife in his hand, he had torn it out of the wound upon the thrust. But he himself was only a splinter of frightful weapon with which Europe was committing suicide.

Carmer saw him no more. He felt no pain, only a sensation of streaming out, of flowing away. And brightness before his eyes, as he passed.

For from her great height on the white cliff Notre Dame de la Garde shone down through dim defiles and labyrinths of stone, into the darkness of the murderous city, and pierced it with day's last shaft: not the image of a saint, that was too far to see from here; only a greeting and a gleam, the silver handle flashing in the sun, the pledge.

A NOTE ON THE TYPE
IN WHICH THIS BOOK IS SET

This book is set on the Monotype in Garamont, a modern rendering of the type first cut in the sixteenth century by Claude Garamond (1510-1561). He was a pupil of Geofroy Tory and is believed to have based his letters on Venetian models, although he introduced a number of important differences. It is to him we owe the letter which we know as Old Style. He gave to his letters a certain elegance and a feeling of movement which won for their creator an immediate reputation and the patronage of the French King, Francis I.



SET UP,
ELECTROTYPED, PRINTED
AND BOUND
BY THE *Plimpton Press*, NORWOOD, MASS.
PAPER MANUFACTURED
BY *Curtis & Brother*,
NEWARK, DEL.

LIBRARY



141 951

UNIVERSAL
LIBRARY

